THE MICRONUTRIENT INITIATIVE

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND OPERATIONS 1992-2000

MESTOR ASSOCIATES CANADA

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MI is playing an important and unique role in the global fight against micronutrient deficiencies and has achieved international recognition within the eight years of its existence. This success has been achieved despite some significant problems in the management of its program, budget and Secretariat operations which are reducing the effectiveness of its overall performance. These issues need urgent attention but they can be resolved by the actions of MI management, some of which are already underway and others are on the drawing board. In addition to improved systems for managing information, budgets and staff, MI needs a redefined governing body which can provide clearer direction. In the short term, an important task for the Steering Committee and for its host organization, IDRC, is to consider MI's future organizational options. In view of the need to take stock, to reduce backlog, to establish new information and management systems, it may be wise to consider a transition year before MI embarks fully on its next five-year strategic plan and mounts major new programs.

Background

This is the first external evaluation of the Micronutrient Initiative (MI) since it began operations eight years ago as the brainchild of the World Bank and other international organizations, which agreed to create an international secretariat to implement the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children. The idea eventually found a home in Canada where, with the support of CIDA and IDRC, the MI became the first International Secretariat at IDRC. MI has grown from a small group of four staff managing an annual budget of less than $6 million in 1992-93, to an organization of 39 staff and a budget in 1999-2000 of $37.8 million.

Purpose and approach of the evaluation

The evaluation is to examine the programs, operations and management of MI with the expectation that it will provide information that will help MI in its new five-year strategic plan. The study took place in April-July 2000 and was based on (1) field visits to Bangladesh, India and Nepal; (2) an interview survey with 41 people in South Asia and with 74 people in Ottawa and by telephone in other regions, making 115 interviews in all; and (3) a review of the files and documents held in MI, particularly those relating to the last fiscal year 1999-2000 and the last four year workplan 1997-2000. Particular effort was paid to obtain the views of five categories of MI's external partners: international organizations and donors; consultants and projects leaders; governments (Bangladesh, India and Nepal); private sector; and the NGO community.

MI's scope of work

MI works principally on three micronutrients: vitamin A, iodine and iron. It is currently managing about 76 active projects, several of which have multi-million dollar budgets. The focus of its current projects is vitamin A (36%); multiple micronutrients (32%); iron (19%) and iodine (11%). In terms of emphasis, 31% of its current projects deal with food fortification; 19% with supplementation; 28% are research and technology development; and 24% support technical assistance, advocacy, and general nutrition activities.

MI's program of work is structured into five focus areas:

- Advocacy and alliance building
- Development and application of technologies
- National and regional initiatives
- Information management and capacity building
- Resolution of key operational issues

Partnerships are critical to MI's ability to carry out its projects. All except three of its current project portfolio are with partners. Just over half are undertaken in partnership with international organizations, particularly UNICEF, WHO, PAHO, the World Bank and ICCIDD. MI is collaborating with UNICEF on 19% of its projects and with WHO on 17%. Governments are listed as partners in 39% of MI projects, and NGO's in 25%. The private sector is a partner in only 5 projects (7%).

The geographic distribution of MI's projects is 33% in Asia, 13% in Africa, 15% in the Middle East and North Africa and 16% in Latin America and the Caribbean. There are also 22% of projects by number which are either inter-regional or are non-region specific. Thus MI presently has project activities in 50 different countries (*table 2).*

Objectives and performance

MI set out objectives for its five focus areas for the period 1997-2000 (*table 3).* These reflect an expanded range of activities from that which were initially envisaged for MI. It was not possible to directly measure the performance of MI against the objectives given in the Workplan for 1997-2000 because MI reporting on activities to its Steering Committee is not referenced to the focus area objectives, which are cast more as goals than measurable objectives.

Instead, the evaluation examined a selection of the projects in each focus area and compared the findings with the views of MI's external partners on MI's performance. The activities set out in the 1997-2000 Workplan were also compared with those that were actually implemented. This showed that in the four-year period MI undertook an additional 32% of projects and did not implement 58% of those it had spelled out in the Workplan (*table 5).* This shift in the project portfolio reflects MI's responsiveness to new proposals. It is also a result of major grants from CIDA in the form of Special Projects during the four years. There appears to be a negative relationship between many new activities and the effectiveness of the Secretariat operations.

Success stories

MI has some notable success stories that have achieved international recognition. These include its advocacy work in general, vitamin A supplementation distribution (especially when linked to National Immunization Days), their contribution towards universal salt iodization, and the development of double fortified salt. An example of MI's responsiveness is the fast turnaround of six weeks to provide vitamin A premix to Nicaragua in 1999 in response to an emergency call. MI is also recognized for its contribution to resolving key scientific debates by supporting a meta-analysis of 22 completed trials of iron supplementation, which compared the efficacy of weekly and daily supplementation patterns.

MI's work in advocacy
MI has targetted much of its work in advocacy to international organizations, governments and the private sector concerning micronutrient malnutrition, especially vitamin A and iodine – to the neglect of iron. It plans to give iron higher priority through a new global initiative. There is a concern that in the future the attention of the donor community may shift from micronutrient malnutrition.

The evaluation recommends that MI consider changing advocacy from a separate focus area to a main modality through which it implements all its programs. Other recommendations include more emphasis on *critical advocacy* and less promotional advocacy; ensuring that advocacy is built on alliances with key partner organizations, and a special advocacy strategy targetted at the private sector.

Research and Technology
MI's work on research and technology cuts across two of its focus areas: *Development and Application of Technologies* and *Resolution of Key Operational Issues.* It supports research and development across the continuum from measuring micronutrient deficiencies in human populations before and after interventions are made; to identifying the best food vehicles for fortification; to developing the food fortification technologies and going to scale after successful trials and pilot projects.

The recommendations are that MI should continue to support the development and testing of technologies, with the suggestion that more networking between projects will increase the chances of technology transfer between regions. Other recommendations include: MI could do more policy research on enabling legislative and *economic* environments for promoting food fortification by the private sector; more attention to small scale food fortification; and that MI commission an independent scientific assessment of the work it has supported in double or multiple fortified salt.

National and regional programs
Some of the most successful parts of MI's activities have been in helping countries to develop national plans for micronutrient supplementation and fortification, as well as other strategies such as dietary diversification. They are also some of the more controversial activities that MI undertakes from the perspective of other international agencies. National program activities in South Asia have proved to be very labour-intensive and "hands-on" for MI. Regional networks focused on specific themes such as flour fortification may be a more effective approach for MI to strengthen programs at the national scale.

The recommendations for this focus area are that MI should consider reducing its work in national programs and work more on thematic regional networks with strong partners like WHO; and national programs should include a large capacity building component even if they take longer.

Publications and website
MI has produced many publications some of which have been well received, especially the more technical ones. MI does not appear to have been very strategic in its publications and they have taxed staff resources in editing meeting proceedings etc. This has also led to problems in reports being delayed and not well disseminated. MI's website is in urgent need of rebuilding and

redesign. It is inadequately updated and is not interactive. It should become a key dissemination and discussion tool for MI and a premier website on micronutrients.

The recommendations are that MI should have a strategy for information dissemination which encompasses its publications and its website. It should do fewer print publications and focus on technical reports and briefings, as well as outsourcing most of the technical editing. It should ensure that it has explicit agreements in place for co-sponsored publications. As many as possible of its publications should be made available for free downloading from the website. MI should re-launch an updated and more interactive website as a priority.

Key program issues

MI's niche
MI faces questions from its partners about its core business. It is important therefore that it clearly defines its niche in the context of its comparative advantages, especially as MI is a new and small organization compared to some of the major players. Its niche is best defined as advocacy on food fortification, and alliance building with the public and private sectors, through the provision of funds and technical expertise.

Decision criteria for program management
MI does not have clear, corporate criteria for program management, for assigning priorities and for making decisions on funding projects.

It is recommended that MI put in place a Performance Based Management System (PBMS) that will allow it to link planning, progress and results. CIDA has made some proposals for results based indicators that can be incorporated into a PBMS. In developing the PBMS, it is recommended that MI discuss with its external partners the feasibility of some common indicators for measuring progress in reducing micronutrient malnutrition and in expanding food fortification.

Management of MI's partnerships
MI implements its program through and with its partners. Its relationships with them are therefore critical to MI's success. MI has not always been able to fulfill the expectations of its partners and this has led to some criticisms in the past.

It is recommended that MI develop an internal "code of conduct" that can support more effective working relationships with its partners.

In working with the private sector, it is recommended that MI inform them about the broader context of its work, beyond that in which the private sector corporation is working with MI. MI should also seek corporate funds for some of its work in food fortification and should have in place a policy for accepting private sector donations.

Sustainability and capacity building
While it is recognized that sustainability in micronutrient programs is a long way off in many developing countries, MI can work to achieve greater sustainability for the projects that it initiates. Capacity building is a key mechanism for building long term sustainability.

It is recommended that MI give higher priority to capacity building in the future.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MI has not given as much attention to monitoring and evaluation in the past, including of its own performance, as it should in the future.

It is recommended that it develop an evaluation framework as part of the PBMS which will include more project evaluations and other systematic ways of gathering information on MI's performance.

Strategic Plan 2000-2005
The strategic planning process took more than a year and was time consuming for MI management and the Steering Committee. A new strategic plan is in place.

It is recommended that objectives be added to the strategic plan and that an *Implementation Plan* be prepared for the five-year period in addition to annual programs of work and budget.

Key Operational Issues

MI's operations are a constraint to its program performance. Chief among its problems is the lack of information systems to manage its programs and financial reporting. The other is management, especially the organization of staff, and relationships with the MI-SARO Regional Office and MI consultants.

Information management
This evaluation was hampered by the lack of systematic information available in MI. The problem is much more severe for MI's operations. It is one of the most urgent issues for MI and IDRC to discuss, since the question revolves about the suitability of the IDRC program management system for MI.

It is recommended that MI immediately establish a Task Force to review the options for a program management information system that can link financial data and project data, both project characteristics and results, and be capable of generating a range of reports for MI and its donors.

Secretariat functions
MI has undergone tremendous growth in its budget and staff in the last two years. This has contributed to a situation in which MI is not operating as efficiently as it could.

It is recommended that MI should reduce administrative tasks by funding fewer, larger projects and using executing agencies for monitoring and evaluation, especially for network projects. MI and IDRC should continue to find ways to reduce administrative duplication and MI program staff should develop internal performance standards similar to those used in IDRC.

Staff management
MI needs to better organize its work, both to work more effectively in teams and to have clear responsibilities for tasks. Directors should focus more on managing and should reduce their own project portfolios. The Executive Director should use his time more strategically to manage the Secretariat, build external alliances and represent MI at the highest levels. He should delegate most of his current work and travel for project development and management of consultant tasks to his staff. New program staff needs more training in IDRC procedures and performance standards.

Regional staff
There should be a clearer understanding of the roles of MI-SARO and MI-Ottawa and MI-SARO should be involved in any major decision being considered by MI management in respect of the region.

It is recommended that MI SARO take the lead in program development in the region and be informed of all visits by MI staff and consultants well ahead of their arrival in the region. National Program Officers should not be "too hands-on" when advising national governments and they should be granted clearly defined levels of authority with respect to programs and funds. New Advisory Committee structures to advise on MI programs in the region should be established and the Steering Committee should be regularly informed about them.

Consultants
MI needs to think more strategically about how to use its consultants which play a key role in MI's human resource structure. MI's long-term consultants should be managed by results. Current administrative difficulties between MI and IDRC in handling consultants can be reduced by agreeing on an agreed framework for departures from IDRC normal policies for contracts and for travel.

Financial Issues

The contributions to MI from its donors have tripled in the last four years to nearly CAD $38 million. This has created an unspent accumulation of over CAD $18.9 million at the beginning of 2000-2001, which needs to be reduced as soon as possible.

It is recommended that MI reduces its accumulated surplus as a matter of priority and does not seek additional donors or undertake more fee-for-service activities until it can show that it has taken steps to reduce its surplus and to increase the efficiency of the Secretariat.

Governance

There are three important aspects of MI's governance that affect its operation and its accountability. One is that it is legally part of IDRC and there is a complex accountability structure between MI, its Steering Committee, its individual donors, and the President and Board of IDRC. The second is that the Steering Committee is a small body of donors that has a membership fee and proportional "voting" according to contribution. This has meant some important partners for MI are not on the Steering Committee, and the members feel that they have unequal voices around the table. The third important aspect of MI's governance is that it has one dominant donor, CIDA which has provided more than 88% of its budget since inception.

It is recommended that the Steering Committee be enlarged by the addition of independent experts and representatives of other key partners, and that members be asked to act as advisors to MI rather than as representatives of their own agencies' interests. It is also recommended that information to the Steering Committee be improved by providing integrated fiscal and program data referred to objectives that are approved by the Steering Committee.

It is not considered necessary to establish a Technical Advisory Committee. Rather, MI could set up *ad hoc* advisory committees around its major initiatives, such as the planned global iron strategy. For its part, IDRC should consider appointing a senior officer with responsibility for managing all aspects of the IDRC-MI relationship for the Centre. The Executive Director of MI will need to work closely with the President of IDRC, or her designate, to ensure good information flow between MI and IDRC.

Institutional issues

Since it started, MI has grown to a size and complexity of program and organization that puts some strains on its current status as a Secretariat within IDRC. Its *modus operandi* and approach to development assistance are also significantly different from that of IDRC.

It is recommended that IDRC and the Steering Committee agree on a process for examining MI's future institutional development with the goal of arriving at a preliminary decision before the end of the fiscal year.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the evaluation

On April 1 2000, the Micronutrient Initiative (MI)[1] completed its first eight years of operation. During that time, MI has achieved considerable success. It has established itself as an important player in the international micronutrient arena: it has appropriated nearly CAD $100 million in its programs and has developed an international reputation for its technical expertise. MI has also experienced a tremendous growth in resources, size and workload. Its budget has increased from CAD $5.9 million in 1992-93 to CAD $37.8 million in 1999-2000; its staff has grown from four to thirty-nine; and its annual program activity has expanded to some 76 active projects and a further 197 proposals in the pipeline by April 1 2000.

MI has not had an external evaluation of its activities and operations before the present one.[2] IDRC undertook a review of its Secretariats in November 1998, which included MI as one of its case studies[3]. The present evaluation was requested by the MI Steering Committee at its meeting on July 13 1999 with the terms of reference to be determined by IDRC in consultation with the Steering Committee. At its meeting on 27 January 2000, the Steering Committee decided to establish an Advisory Committee to work with the evaluation team.

One concern expressed by the Steering Committee, and which has been a challenge to the evaluation team, is that the evaluation is being conducted a few weeks after the completion of the strategic planning process for 2000-2005 and more than a year after a major organization restructuring and expansion including the recruitment of more than half of the present staff. The more usual approach is to first undertake an evaluation; identify what needs changing; set new goals and strategy and then hire staff and make any needed organizational adjustments to achieve those goals. This reversal of the normal order has meant that the evaluation has no baseline from which to work and must deal with enormous changes that have occurred within MI in the past two years. It also means that the follow-up to the evaluation findings and recommendations has to be built into a strategic planning process that is already underway.

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[1] Throughout the report MI has been referred to as a separate organization although it is legally part of IDRC. This reflects the perception of MI from the outside and facilitates the discussion of MI-IDRC relationships.

[2] MI has commissioned a number of specific studies to guide its strategy and to provide management with advice on human resources and organization.

[3] J. Armstrong and A. Whyte, 1998, Learning Partnerships: A review of IDRC Secretariats; IDRC, Ottawa.

This situation has influenced the evaluation in two important ways. First, although the evaluation is the first one for eight years, it was decided to concentrate the research for the program evaluation on the period of the last *Workplan 1997-2000* and for the evaluation of MI operations on 1999-2000, after the major recruitment had been completed. In this way it is hoped that the findings and recommendations are most relevant to the current situation in MI. The earlier years are referred to in terms of their historical perspective.

The second way in which the evaluation has taken account of the recent strategic planning process is to bring together the implications of our findings for the next stage of the Strategic Plan 2000-2005 (section 5).

1.2 Terms of reference

The evaluation is to examine the programs, operations and management of MI with the expectation that the evaluation will provide information that will contribute to the new five-year plan and will constitute a learning experience for the MI. The specific terms of reference are that the evaluation will:

a) evaluate the past performance of the programs of the MI with respect to MI's stated goals and objectives;
b) examine how present operations and management support the programs;
c) evaluate whether the goals and objectives of MI are appropriate and realistic;
d) assess the impact of the work of MI on its partners and on its external environment, especially with respect to systems of delivery for micronutrients and national micronutrient programs;
e) identify the reasons/critical factors that explain the successes or failures of MI programs and how successes might be replicated;
f) create a learning experience for all stakeholders, especially the MI Secretariat and thereby contribute to the development of organizational and individual capacities; and
g) help MI use the information gathered to guide and improve its future programming.

In addition, the Steering Committee had expressed the views that the evaluation would also comment on the new strategic plan and would seek external views of the MI and its strategy from partner organizations.

1.3 Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation study was conducted by Robert Auger and Anne Whyte of Mestor Associates Canada and consisted of 115 days work over three and a half months (April-July 2000). Three main approaches were adopted to provide different

types of information to the evaluation and to act as partial crosschecks to one another:

(1) field visit to one region in which MI has program activities and is working with a range of local and international partners;

(2) interview survey with representatives of partner organizations, consultants, and grantees to obtain external views of MI's work and operations, and interviews and group discussions with all MI management and staff to obtain internal views and experience;

(3) review of documents and files held by MI.

1.3.1 Field visit

The field visit was to South Asia (New Delhi and Calcutta in India; Dhaka in Bangladesh and Kathmandu in Nepal) as it is in this region that MI has concentrated its activities at the national and local levels. The visits took place over 17 days from April 3 to 20 2000. The evaluation team had interviews with 41 people representing 30 organizations that are working with MI in the region, including government, the private sector, local NGOs and national and regional offices of international organizations. As the visit coincided with one of the two times annually that the vitamin A capsules are distributed nationally in Nepal, the team had the opportunity to make field observations of the process in some of the small rural communities around Kathmandu.

The evaluation team also interviewed all the MI program staff in the region, including the Regional Director and National Program Officers, and held a focus group discussion on April 14 2000 with all Regional MI program and local support staff in the SARO Regional Office, on regional strategic issues for MI.

1.3.2 Interview survey

In addition to the 41 persons interviewed during the field visit, an interview survey was undertaken during May-June 2000 with an additional 74 persons making a total of 115 persons interviewed. This included all MI managers and some senior staff in individual interviews of one or more hours, and three small group meetings (2-6 persons in each) with MI staff (program staff, program assistants and grant assistants). All members of the MI Steering Committee were interviewed. In addition, interviews were held with the key personnel within IDRC who provide services to MI, including the Client Services Group, Partnership and Business Development Office (PBDO), legal and travel services.

Appendix 1 lists all the internal and external persons interviewed internationally, in Ottawa and in the South Asia region. The external interviews were held with representative samples of five key groups:

- international organizations and donors with which MI works most closely (43 persons interviewed representing 14 organizations. Representatives of all of MI's key partners in this category were interviewed);
- consultants and project leaders receiving grants from MI (14 persons);
- government representatives in India, Bangladesh and Nepal (12 persons interviewed during the field visit);
- private sector (8 persons interviewed representing both multinational corporations and national food industry representatives in India and Canada, including most of MI's key international industry partners);
- NGO community (11 persons interviewed representing 7 NGO partners working in South Asia).

These samples were selected from a combination of suggestions from the Evaluation Advisory Committee and as a result of our review of the files. Some additional interviews took place as follow-ups to suggestions received during earlier interviews. A very few people who were selected for the original sample were not able to take part owing to travel commitments during May and June, but there were no refusals.

The interview survey was deliberately made more extensive than originally planned to ensure that an adequate range of experience and views among the external partners was captured. For the international partner organizations and donors, virtually all the key organizations were included in the survey. Similarly, with the private sector – most of the key international organizations were contacted, but not the regional ones. For the national industry partners and the local NGOs, only representatives in South Asia were interviewed, and the validity of their comments is restricted to their experience of MI in that region. For the consultants and grantees, 12 persons were interviewed. This is believed to be a representative sample of MI's main consultants, the grantees interviewed were all Canadian.

The interviews in Ottawa and in India, Bangladesh and Nepal were generally in person. The international interviews were undertaken by phone. For both the face-to-face and telephone interviews, an interview guide was provided to the interviewee beforehand, which listed the main areas of the interview. Several different guides were prepared to account for differences between the internal and external interviews; the Steering Committee; the specialized roles of the IDRC

service groups; the representatives of international partners and donors; consultants and grantees; and the private sector. All interviews included core questions on:

- the mission and goals, comparative advantage and niche of MI;
- program and geographic priorities in the past and future;
- main successes and failures or shortcomings of MI;
- performance of the Secretariat;
- program monitoring and evaluation;
- MI's work in advocacy;
- program sustainability;
- decision-making; strategic planning and policy development;
- the collaborative process; partnership with MI and key partner organizations for MI;
- longer term future for MI.

The interviews were semi-structured with open questions. The great value from the interviews lay in the wealth of qualitative data that they provided, and which has been used extensively throughout this report. Some content analysis was undertaken on specific questions to provide quantitative information and to identify where there were different perspectives and experiences across the various groups.

The interviewee was assured of absolute confidentiality in the interview and was asked to provide advice for the evaluation study itself as well as being invited to ask questions of the interviewer. The interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 3 hours with the median time being just over one hour each. The immediate response from interviewees to the interview format and questions was all positive: some also expressed enthusiasm for the inclusion of the views of external partners in the evaluation and said that it reflected well on the openness of MI to learning lessons from its partners and their experience.

1.3.3 Review of files, documents and publications

This part of the evaluation took place after most of the interviews were completed. The file review was in part to follow-up on information provided during the interviews to document facts and to verify the more important issues that they raised. In addition, some purposive sampling (about 20% sample of each group) was undertaken of files as part of the evaluation of MI operations. These included:

- proposals accepted by MI during 1999-2000;
- proposals rejected by MI during 1999-2000;
- proposals awaiting decision at end of fiscal year 1999-2000;
- files on meetings in various years organized by MI;

- consultant files;
- files relating to double fortified salt.

Most of the systematic sampling of files focused on the last fiscal year (1999-2000) for two main reasons. This was the only year in which the present complement of staff was largely in place and thus the human resource strength was closest to the expected future situation. Secondly, the only database available on MI activities is for the last fiscal year.

1.4 Acknowledgements

No evaluation can be undertaken successfully without the support and input of many people. This evaluation has benefited from the guidance of the Evaluation Advisory Committee,[4] and the strong support of the *Executive Director of MI*, Venkatesh Mannar; the *Deputy Executive Director*, Frank Eady; the *Director of Finance and Administration*, Ray Robinson; and the *Regional Director*, Teresa Beemans.

In South Asia, we would especially like to thank the *National Program Officers* Sarawasti Bulusu (India), Mohammad Shahjahan (Bangladesh), and Macha Raja Maharjan (Nepal) as well as Thomas Schaetzel (*Senior Program Specialist*) for arranging our meetings and field visits, and giving us such insights into MI's work in their countries. All MI Directors and staff have been cooperative with the evaluation team and have taken the time to meet with us and to share documents. Carrie Smith provided administrative liaison and support to the evaluation team and was helpful to us in many ways. We have had free access to files and documents available.

Most important, we have met everywhere within MI an open and positive attitude towards the evaluation process, which is not always the lot of evaluators. For making our task so pleasant and rewarding, we are grateful to the MI Secretariat. In addition, we would like to acknowledge all those external partners who agreed to be interviewed, either in person or by telephone. Everybody to whom we spoke, were generous with their time and their ideas.

Any gaps and errors remain the responsibility of the evaluation team. There has not been time to review all the activities of MI over the last eight years and in selecting those for closer examination, some important aspects may have been overlooked and we may have misinterpreted some evidence. Despite such flaws, we hope that our evaluation is on target in its main findings and that its recommendations will prove to be helpful to MI as it embarks upon its next five-year strategy.

[4] Advisory Committee members are Judith McGuire (World Bank), Joanne Moores (CIDA), Frank Eady (Deputy Executive Director, MI), Jenny Cervinskas (Program Unit-MI); Raymond Robinson (Finance and Administration Unit); Nada Elhusseiny (Technology And Research Unit- MI); Ibrahim Daibes (Information and Communication Unit –MI) and Terry Smutylo (Director, Evaluation Unit, IDRC).

2 MI: ORIGINS, MISSION AND SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 Origins

The *idea* of an international Micronutrient Initiative Secretariat was one of the initiatives being discussed by a number of international agencies around the World Summit for Children, which was held in New York in September 1990. A number of recent research and technological developments at that time made people realize that micronutrient malnutrition had severe consequences for human health and that these deficiencies could be prevented with sustainable cost-effective solutions. This sparked greater interest among international agencies and bilateral donors, including Canada. In 1990, UNICEF started a program on micronutrients and the *Global Micronutrient* Initiative was launched by the ACC/SCN (UN Administrative Coordinating Committee Sub-Committee on Nutrition).

The specific origins of the MI lay in a World Bank proposal[5] that argued that the individual initiatives and new resources being spent on micronutrients on the part of different international agencies and donors would be more effectively allocated if there were a central coordinating body or focal point. The initial idea was that such a Micronutrient Initiative would be affiliated with the ACC/SCN and that it would be supported by donors and private institutions, which would pool their resources. Behind the proposal was a vision that sustainable micronutrient strategies required a broader strategy than health alone, and one which brought together the efforts of agriculture; education; and the private sector, especially the food industry. The World Bank proposal was that the Micronutrient Secretariat would:

- raise awareness among governments and international agencies about micronutrient malnutrition- its costs and available solutions, including best practice;
- mobilize resources from new sources, including private industry and foundations;
- develop regional centers for training, laboratory analysis, technical assistance and monitoring;
- support research and development of emerging technologies where critical gaps exist;
- develop models for addressing micronutrient malnutrition through different sectors; and

[5] World Bank, 1990,Micronutrient Malnutrition: A proposal for a new Special Grant, FY 92-94; internal document dated December 12 1990.

- help donors and governments identify opportunities for investment and monitor progress toward goals.

Thus, the "blueprint" for MI was drawn as early as 1990, to meet a need identified by the international community, as articulated by the World Bank, which felt it had a particularly important role to play in the initiative because of the Bank's multi-sectoral perspective and its strength in assessing the economic soundness of projects. The original proposal included a governance structure of an Executive Board consisting of UNICEF, WHO, FAO, UNDP and the World Bank, together with four bilateral donors, three scientific experts and the Chair of the ACC/SCN.

The Canadian Government hosted a meeting on micronutrient malnutrition for Health Ministers in Montreal in 1991 (called *Ending Hidden Hunger*) and during the discussions on the proposed coordinating secretariat, IDRC made an offer to host the secretariat linked closely to IDRC programs but functioning as a self-supporting unit reporting to its own Executive Board.

In the IDRC proposal[6], the role of MI in research is emphasized, as well as the strengthening of national and regional institutions and individual skills. The proposal also foresees close collaboration with IDRC Health Sciences Division and seeks to "bridge the gap" between IDRC's mandate for research support and the putative role of the future MI by arguing that "IDRC focuses its support in nutrition on operational research, community and participatory assessment including social marketing, and policy and action linkages."

The Secretariat was proposed to have a lifetime of ten years, after which it was anticipated, its responsibilities could be reduced and its functions transferred to an international organization. This was in line with the goals of the World Summit for Children and the progress that would be realized in reducing micronutrient malnutrition by 2000. Operationally, the Secretariat was planned to have a small staff of about four professionals and would work mainly through a roster of external consultants. In addition to the MI Executive Board, there would be an external Technical Advisory Group of recognized experts, including members from developing countries.

These key elements of the IDRC proposal, which was accepted by the donors and international organizations in Montreal in 1991 and adopted by the IDRC Board of Governors in 1992, are recapitulated here because they represent the origins of some of the issues that emerge in the present evaluation. These are: the governance issue, or the degree of independence of MI from IDRC; the program "fit" issue, or how research-oriented MI activities are; the consultant issue; and the long-term future of MI.

[6] IDRC proposal for a Micronutrients Secretariats discussed by donors in Montreal in 1991 and presented to the IDRC Executive Committee in January 1992.

MI was established on 1 April 1992 as the Micronutrient Initiative with funding from CIDA, IDRC, the World Bank and UNICEF, as the first International Secretariat in IDRC, with an initial lifespan of two years.

2.2 Mission

MI took as its first mission the goals of the World Summit for Children held in New York in September 1990. These were to reach by the year 2000:

- the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD);
- the virtual elimination of vitamin A deficiency and its consequences, including blindness;
- the reduction of iron deficiency anemia among women of child-bearing age by one third of the 1990 levels.

The guiding document for the period 1997-2000 is the Workplan, discussed initially by the Steering Committee on May 21 1997 and again on January 20 1998. In this document, the mission statement for 1997-2000 restates the initial MI mission statement of 1992.

The mission is regarded as appropriate and clear by both external partners and within the MI Secretariat. Indeed, the focused mandate represented by the mission statement, is seen by both MI and by its external partners as one of MI's strongest comparative advantages. Other organizations, such as UNICEF or WHO, have much broader mandates than MI, while a few (e.g. ICCIDD) are more narrowly focused on one micronutrient. MI's focus on all micronutrients and a wide range of strategies to eliminate micronutrient deficiencies is widely regarded as "just right".

Most of MI's partners see MI's main modalities for implementing its mission to be (1) global advocacy and agenda setting; (2) identifying gaps and opportunities; and (3) providing funds and technical expertise.

2.3 Scope of MI's current program

MI is currently managing some 76 projects[7]. These range from support and follow-up for individual meetings, such as the Manila Food Fortification Forum held in February 2000, to research projects such as the one on double fortified salt with the University of Toronto, to a global, multimillion dollar Vitamin A procurement and distribution program for vulnerable children and mothers. The size and complexity of

[7] MI project database 1999-2000. The version provided to the evaluation team on which this analysis is based is dated June 12 2000.

this project portfolio is truly impressive and a testament to the hard work and commitment – and also the enthusiasm - of MI's leadership and staff.

2.3.1 Current projects by micronutrient and approach

Table 1 provides an overview of the current portfolio of active projects. The largest group of projects is focused on vitamin A (36% of projects), followed by multiple micronutrients (32%) and iron (19%). Iodine accounts for only 11% of current projects. In terms of approach to fighting micronutrient deficiency, 34 projects are on food fortification and 21 on supplementation. The research and technical assistance projects are either well upstream in the research and development process from a specific micronutrient delivery mechanism, or are providing general technical assistance. About ten of the projects have a major advocacy component (including five major meetings) and three are more general community nutrition projects.

Table 1 Project portfolio of MI: numbers of active projects 1999-2000 (based on MI project database)

MICRO-NUTRIENT	Research	Technical Assistance	Supplemen-tation	Fortification	TOTAL**
VITAMIN A	12	4	14	8	**27**
IODINE	3	3	0	5	**8**
IRON*	5	8	1	12	**14**
ZINC	1				**1**
MULTIPLE	11	9	6	10	**24**
TOTAL	**31**	**24**	**21**	**34**	**74**

* includes one project on iron and zinc and one on iron and iodine

** total is less than sum of columns because some projects include more than one approach. One of the 75 projects was not assigned to any of the four approaches.

2.3.2 Geographic distribution of current projects

The project database was searched for the geographic distribution of the projects (table 2). Again, as no data are available in the database on project budgets, the distribution of projects can only be discussed in terms of numbers of projects. This is unfortunate especially because some projects are very large compared to others, but it does provide some measure of the administrative demands of the project portfolio and the geographic dispersion of project components that need to be monitored.

Table 2 Geographic distribution of current MI projects 1999-2000

REGION	COUNTRIES	NUMBER OF PROJECTS		# COUNTRIES WITH MI PROJECTS
ASIA	Nepal	10		
	Bangladesh	6		
	India	4		
	Vietnam	2		
	China	1		
	Multi-country	**2**		
			25	**14**
AFRICA	Burkino Faso	2		
	Tanzania	1		
	Zambia	1		
	Ghana	1		
	Uganda	1		
	Gambia	1		
	Multi-country	**3**		
			10	**17**
MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA	Yemen	2		
	Egypt	1		
	Iraq	1		
	Lebanon	1		
	Oman	1		
	Iran	1		
	Morocco	2		
	Tunisia	2		
	Multi-country	**0**		
			11	**8**
LATIN AMERICA	Mexico	3		
	Bolivia	2		
	Brazil	1		
	Nicaragua	1		
	Ecuador	1		
	Guatemala	1		
	Multi-country	**3**		
			12	**11**
GLOBAL	**Multi-region**	10		*
	No region/NA	7		
TOTAL		**75**		**50**

* countries are included under the regional totals

Table 2 shows that, in terms of numbers of projects, there are 25 in Asia (33%), 10 in Africa (13%), 11 in the Middle East and North Africa (15%) and 12 in Latin America and the Caribbean (16%). In addition, there are 10 global projects involving activities in several regions and 7 non-region specific projects. This distribution is less concentrated on South Asia (27%) and more evenly distributed in other regions of the world than was expected from the discussions in the interviews. It does represent a widely dispersed portfolio of activities in 50 countries that is demanding of MI staff time and is dependent on their effective collaboration with partners.

2.3.3 Project partnerships

Partnerships are critical to MI's performance. All except three projects in the 1999-2000 database are listed as being implemented with partners. Thirty-nine projects (52% of the total) are being undertaken with international partner organizations (particularly UNICEF, WHO, PAHO, World Bank and ICCIDD). MI is collaborating with UNICEF on 14 projects and with WHO on 13 projects.

These agencies therefore represent key partners for MI to realize its objectives and to successfully complete its projects. Twenty-nine projects (39%) have national governments as partners; 27 projects (36%) have research institutions as partners; 19 projects (25%) are in partnership with NGOs (7 with local NGOs and 12 with international NGOs); and only five projects are in direct partnership with the private sector. Many of these projects are undertaken with more than one partner. The issues arising from MI's major dependence on its partnerships for its success are discussed in section 4.4.

3 OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE

There are essentially three parts to the question about how well MI has performed over the past few years. These are:

- Are the goals and objectives of MI appropriate and realistic?
- Are the goals and objectives clearly defined and understood by MI and its partners in carrying out its activities?
- How much progress has been made towards achieving those goals and objectives?

To measure performance, the evaluation has focused on the period 1997-2000 which is covered by the most recent workplan. This *Workplan* sets out the strategic objectives for MI for the last four years. For reasons discussed in section 3.1, it has not been possible to evaluate the recent performance of MI within the framework of its own objectives. Instead we have reviewed each major area of MI's work and integrated data from our review of MI files and reports and on information and perceptions obtained through the interviews. Some of the key questions about program performance that we have tried to address are:

- MI is known for, and is proud of, its track-record in advocacy. But advocacy for what and to whom? Should MI be more focused and more strategic in its advocacy activities?

- The technology and research program can chalk up some real successes in identifying technological gaps and filling them. But is it doing enough to develop technologies that will reach the most vulnerable populations who do not eat the food processed by the formal industrial sector with which MI works most closely?

- MI has also had considerable success in its national and regional programs. But do they fit with MI's comparative advantage? Should MI be working with governments less on its own and more with its international partners?

- What does MI plan to achieve with its publications and website? Can it be more strategic with its publications and more interactive with its website?

The assessment of MI's performance with respect to its programs is based on:

- analysis of MI's active projects in 1999-2000;
- program success stories (as seen by partners);
- comparison of MI's reports on its program activities to the Steering Committee to those foreseen in the *1997-2000 Workplan*;
- interviews with 115 people in MI, IDRC and the main organizations and consultants with which MI works.

What emerges is a picture of hard work, many achievements and some outstanding successes, but inadequate systems in place for knowing if MI is on track, or is achieving the desired results and impact, or for learning from past successes and failures. What the evaluators found is that MI is achieving a great deal but has not systematically documented its own performance, or that of many of its projects.

3.1 MI's strategic objectives

In the *Workplan 1997-2000* MI's strategic objectives are related to its five Focus Areas (table 3):[8]

- Advocacy and alliance building
- Development and application of technologies
- National and regional initiatives
- Information management and capacity building
- Resolution of key operational issues.

Compared to the objectives set out in the proposals for MI prepared by the World Bank in 1990 and by IDRC in 1991 (section 2.1), the strategic objectives for 1997-2000 shown in table 3 reflect an expanded range of activities. In the area of advocacy, the initial focus for MI was to increase awareness among key groups – specifically, governments, international agencies, foundations and the private sector – in order to stimulate action and mobilize new resources. In the strategic objectives set for 1997-2000, this has been expanded to increase global awareness of micronutrient malnutrition. Information management is a new objective, not foreseen specifically in the original objectives.

[8] These Focus Areas are also somewhat confusingly referred to as "thematic areas of work" and "strategic issues" in the Workplan.

Table 3 Strategic objectives for MI: 1997-2000

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES
Advocacy and alliance building	❑ Increase global awareness regarding the magnitude, severity and consequences of micronutrient malnutrition; ❑ Increase awareness and stimulate action by the key players through educating, influencing and motivating them; ❑ Mobilize increased resources from governments, donor agencies, food producers, and civic organizations for the elimination of micronutrient malnutrition.	18
Development and application of technologies	❑ Identification of technology needs related to assessment, interventions and program monitoring; ❑ Adapt and transfer available technologies to provide micronutrients to at-risk populations; and ❑ Develop and refine new technologies appropriate to specific needs.	24
National and regional initiatives	❑ To help develop national strategies and plans; ❑ To help mobilize support (technical and financial) for these plans; ❑ To assist in implementing specific interventions by providing required program support components in order to improve effectiveness and increase program coverage.	52
Information management and Capacity building	❑ Establish and maintain the Micronutrient Information Management Services; ❑ Develop and strengthen local capacity to design, plan, implement, manage and monitor programs.	4 6
Resolution of key operational issues	❑ Identify and support consultation and research to resolve controversies or bottlenecks on key issues which are critical to global micronutrient policy and program formulation, to support investigation of promising solutions, and to provide for a for consensus building on relevant issues.	16

Two areas appear to be major extensions of what was originally envisaged: the development and application of technologies and the national and regional initiatives. In the original proposals for MI, the idea was that research and development would be supported where critical gaps exist. In the *Workplan 1997-2000*, the role of MI has been broadened to identify technology needs, to adapt and transfer available technologies; and to develop new technologies in relation to micronutrient malnutrition.

It is interesting to note that it is the three sets of "new" objectives - relating to the information service on micronutrients; developing new technologies and research; and assisting in implementing national programs - that raise the most questions among MI's partners about the appropriateness of what MI is doing.

We had originally expected to assess what progress MI has made towards achieving its objectives. This has proved not possible for several reasons:

(2) the objectives identified in the *Workplan* are more in the nature of long term goals than immediate objectives for the four year program;

(3) The *indicators* and *expected results* identified in the *Workplan* are related to individual activities and not objectives;

(4) The *indicators* identified are generally immediate outputs (e.g. meeting was held; materials were distributed; feasibility of technique was established; national plan was prepared);

(5) The *expected results* are generally expressed as outcomes in general and qualitative terms (e.g. increased number of committed partners; transfer of technology to local production; public-private sector dialogue initiated; current micronutrient information regularly updated);

(6) The *Workplan* provides no evaluation framework for assessing MI's performance in carrying out the activities or achieving the objectives and no systematic reporting on progress is available by objective.

It has therefore proved not possible to directly measure MI's performance against its stated objectives. Instead, this evaluation has measured the degree to which planned activities were actually completed within the four years (section 3.3) and reviewed in more detail each of MI's main areas of work (sections 3.4 to 3.7). We start with the success stories.

3.2 Success stories

During the interviews with external partners, interviewees were asked to identify areas or activities that they judged to be success stories for MI. Although they are only indicative because of the small numbers, there was sufficient consistency in the responses to believe that the activities named are likely to be seen more generally as areas where MI and its collaborating partners have performed well (table 4). Some of these success stories are briefly described to illustrate the different ways in which MI has been judged to perform outstandingly well.

Table 4 Successful MI activities as judged by MI's partners

Successful MI activity	% of responses N=80
Advocacy work for micronutrients	19%
Vitamin A distribution	18%
Contribution to universal salt iodization	10%
Development of double fortified salt	10%
Working through partners	9%
Sugar fortification technology transfer from Latin America to Africa	9%
Publications with WHO on Vitamin A	9%
Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project	6%
Flour fortification in North Africa/Middle East	4%
Donation of vitamin A premix for sugar fortification in Nicaragua	3%
Meta-analysis of iron supplementation (Beaton and McCabe)	3%
Nepal Micronutrient Status Survey	3%

Advocacy for micronutrients

MI's success in advocacy – "in putting micronutrients on the map" is the most generally recognized successful role that it has played. This advocacy is seen as especially important in relation to the private sector where MI has played a lead role. MI is also seen as having influenced governments, international agencies and the NGOs with which it has worked in paying more attention to micronutrient deficiencies in their own programs.

Global vitamin A initiatives

Another highly recognized success for MI is their role in the procurement and distribution of vitamin A in several projects supported by CIDA through a contribution agreement to MI. These include a project with UNICEF to strengthen existing national programs in 11 countries; a project with WHO-EPI in sub-Saharan Africa using immunization services as the delivery vehicle; a project with PAHO in six countries in Latin America using immunization services; a project with Helen Keller International in West Africa (Burkino Faso, Mali and Niger) working through local NGOs; and a project using mainly local NGOs in fourteen countries (the GVAI project) which was coordinated through PATH Canada in Phase 1. These projects specifically target groups such as children between 6 and 60 months and pregnant and lactating mothers.

MI has also undertaken responsibility for procurement of the vitamin A under a commodities (vitamin A, iron/folate, zinc and iodine) procurement grant from

CIDA. Since 1997, MI has played a role in successfully distributing an estimated one billion vitamin A capsules globally to over 70 UNICEF and NGO field offices. The scale of the vitamin A distribution initiative has helped to put MI itself on the map as an international player in micronutrients. More importantly, where children receive the vitamin A twice a year, it has led to an almost 25% reduction in childhood mortality from all causes; 50% reduction in measles mortality; 33% reduction in diarrheal disease mortality for children between 6 months and 5 years. These tremendous health benefits are gained at little incremental cost (ranging from 2%-10%) over the costs of the national immunization days for polio (NIDs). The linkage of vitamin A distribution with NIDs is widely regarded as part of the success story for UNICEF, WHO and MI.

Donation of vitamin A Premix for sugar fortification in Nicaragua

Where the success of the vitamin A global distribution is associated with the large scale of the operation, the provision of vitamin A premix to Nicaragua is one of the highlights of MI operations that demonstrated its flexibility and responsiveness.

After five years of negotiation between the private sector, the Government and international development agencies, it was agreed that sugar fortification with vitamin A would begin during the 1999-2000 sugar season using a loan from the Nordic Fund for Development to buy the premix. On this basis, MOST/USAID and the Government of Nicaragua agreed to conduct a National Baseline Micronutrient Survey and the Government approved an arrangement with the Sugar Producers Association to transfer the costs of fortification to the consumer.

A problem emerged that meant that the Nordic funds were not available in time for the premix to be used in the 1999-2000 season. This caused immediate tension between the Government and the Sugar Producers Association, which threatened the previous five years of difficult negotiation and concluding agreement.

MI provided an immediate donation of about CAD$500,000 worth of vitamin A premix (about 25% of the total needed) which "bought time" for other donors and the Government to arrange the provision of the remaining 75% needed. MI was asked by the World Bank and USAID/Nicaragua if it could help Nicaragua on an emergency basis. MI then requested CIDA to use funds for that purpose and MI/IDRC managed to complete the administration required within record time. On this occasion, MI proved that it could have a more effective and rapid response than any other organization.

Meta-analysis of iron supplementation

This success story is based on MI contracting two experts to review the data and results of 22 completed trials of iron supplementation covering some 6000 subjects to determine whether weekly or daily iron supplementation is most efficacious for pregnant women, adolescents and schoolchildren and pre-school

children, in different situations of supervision. This has been one of the more contentious issues in how best to provide iron supplementation.

The report by George Beaton and George McCabe[9] is seen as not only a much needed and outstanding piece of scientific meta-research for iron supplementation, but also an example of the kind of consensus building processes that MI should be supporting to resolve some of the outstanding debates and uncertainties in the micronutrient field.

3.3 Progress in implementing activities 1997-2000

To obtain a measure of how many of the planned activities were implemented and how many new activities were undertaken during the course of the four years, the program updates given to the Steering Committee at each meeting have been compared to the activities set out in the 1997-2000 Workplan. This is seen as important in view of the concern heard in the interviews that "MI never says no" and "MI does more unplanned activities than planned ones".

There are some difficulties in this approach. The first is that the program updates are not referenced back to the *Workplan* or to the overall objectives. Some of the projects, for example, the various Vitamin A supplementation projects, are hard to pinpoint in the updates. The second difficulty is that, although there are reports on activities that are delayed, the updates do not appear to include planned activities that have *not* been implemented. The end result is that it is difficult for anyone to track the linkages between work planned and work accomplished. This has implications for the question of program oversight on the part of the Steering Committee.

Table 5 shows the relationship between activities anticipated in the *Workplan* (which was actually finalized in May 1998 - one year into the four year period) and those that had been reported by April 2000. It also shows additional activities undertaken during the four-year period. The table shows that an impressive number of some 120 planned activities are listed in the *Workplan*, of which the largest group (52) falls under national and regional initiatives. Of these 120 activities, action and progress is reported to the Steering Committee on 49 (42%) while there is no information provided in the updates on what happened to the other 70 planned activities.

[9] Beaton G. and McCabe G, 1999, Efficacy of Intermittent Iron Supplementation in the Control of Iron Deficiency Anaemia in Developing Countries: An Analysis of Experience; MI, Ottawa, 124p.

Table 5 MI program 1997-2000: planned, implemented and additional activities

Focus area	Activities 1997-2000 Workplan	Some action reported 1997-2000	No action reported 1997-2000	Additional activities reported
Advocacy and alliance building	18	8	10	1
Development and application of technologies	24	11	12	9
National/regional initiatives	52	19	33	23
Asia/Pacific	20	11	9	10
Africa and Middle East	13	2	11	3
Latin America and Carib.	10	2	8	4
Central Asia, Russia, Europe	6	1	5	0
Global	3	3	0	5*
Information management and capacity building	10	4	6	2
Resolution of key operational issues	16	7	9	4
ALL PROGRAMS	**120**	**49**	**70**	**39**
Percent of total programs	100%	42%	58%	+32%

* this figure represents a major expansion of five existing projects including vitamin A supplementation due to two additional grants from CIDA early in 1999 for a total of $29.5 million, rather than entirely new activities.

This means that 58% of the activities approved by the Steering Committee as part of the *Workplan* were either not acted upon, or were implemented in whole or in part, but were not reported on. The largest proportion and total number of these "missing" activities fall within the *Focus Area on National and Regional Initiatives* (63% of planned activities), which also saw almost as many new activities in 1997-2000 as ones that were both planned and implemented. However, the pattern of adding new activities exists across all Focus Areas.

The undertaking by the Secretariat of some 32% more activities than planned, many of which are meetings, is borne out by interviews with MI staff, consultants and partners, and relates to the way in which program decisions are made and affect operations and performance. These are discussed further under section 6.3.

3.4 MI's work in advocacy

In the 1997-2000 Workplan, MI set out some very broad objectives for its work in advocacy which included increasing global awareness on micronutrient malnutrition and mobilizing increased resources from governments, donor agencies, food producers and civic organizations. No indicators were provided by which progress towards these objectives could be measured but the general thrust of the activities proposed was to:

- Target donors and international agencies on micronutrients generally through meetings, individual presentations, the "Oslo dinner" for participants at the March 1998 meeting of the ACC/SCN; and the secondment of an MI communications expert to the Nutrition section of UNICEF, New York;

- Sensitize governments on micronutrient malnutrition and especially food fortification;

- Strengthen public-private sector partnerships on food fortification, mainly through follow-up meetings to the Ottawa Forum in 1995;

- Increase awareness and commitment of the private sector to food fortification. The main activities were the preparatory meetings and special session and advocacy materials (including the CD-ROM) for Salt 2000. Other materials, such as special issues of trade journals on micronutrients or booklets on food fortification for the industry, were apparently not completed.

The picture that emerges of the past four years is of an advocacy program focused on micronutrient malnutrition, vitamin A and iodine to the neglect of iron[10]. A number of planned activities were not done, but new initiatives were taken up throughout the term of the Workplan. Lack of adequate forward planning and delays are reported to have reduced the effectiveness of some of the advocacy materials and initiatives. The new Information and Communication Unit was not in place until 1998-99.

The Strategic Plan for 2000-2005 proposes some new directions while the target audiences of government, the private sector and "other organizations" remain. In the future, MI plans to promote more integrated nutrition strategies. The results will be evaluated in terms of changes to government policies and programs, including legislation and the level of commitment of the private sector to the process. Special emphasis is to be placed on iron deficiency anemia. These all appear to us to be moves in the right direction. They will also require some rethinking about how MI undertakes advocacy.

The new proposals for MI's work in advocacy correspond closely to what MI's partners see as needed. The partners see three main target audiences for MI's activities: national governments, the private sector and themselves. There is a concern expressed by

[10] Two major initiatives planned – a survey to design an advocacy strategy for iron and a video on iron – have been much delayed and are only now nearing completion.

micronutrient experts that donor interest in supporting micronutrient programs, which has been sustained for the past decade, may give way to other priorities in the next decade. This will create a different challenge for MI's advocacy – to rekindle interest that has dwindled. For this reason, the partners we interviewed believe that the general message about the cost-effectiveness and availability of methods to combat micronutrient deficiencies needs to be continued.

These experts agree with MI on a shift in emphasis to **iron**, but say that the message will be harder to get through to governments and donors because the health benefits of iron supplements or fortified foods are much less obvious than for vitamin A, and the interactions of iron deficiencies with other public health problems like malaria and diarrhoeal diseases is more complex and less understood.

> "Iron is more difficult because there is nothing desperate about it. Women are tired and listless without enough iron but what's new! People don't drop dead or go blind or have goiter like with vitamin A deficiency. People do die on account of severe anemia but it is part of a larger problem".[11]

The most effective means for MI to advocate for micronutrients were seen by partners to be (1) convening meetings of the key players and (2) specially designed products, including publications and CD-ROMs.

We found a general consensus among those interviewed about the "*what*", "*to whom*" and the " *how*" in MI's future advocacy program, which is consistent with MI's own Strategic Plan. One missing element in the future strategy would seem to be the Canadian Parliament and Canadian public as key target groups for MI's advocacy, to ensure continued support for Canadian involvement in micronutrients and particularly for the leadership shown by Canadian CIDA in combating vitamin A deficiencies worldwide. The TV documentary "Canada's Two Cents Worth" is absolutely a step in the right direction.

Some concerns were expressed by a few interviewees about the overall approach MI has taken in its advocacy work, which we feel point to a weakness in MI's effectiveness in the future, as it tackles the more difficult tasks of promoting the cause of iron deficiency anemia and micronutrients in a world which may have moved on to other concerns. These relate to basing advocacy on the best science and addressing uncertainties and opposing views as part of the advocacy message.

- Good advocacy needs to be underpinned with good science, good analysis and experience. As MI begins to focus on advocacy for iron, it should ensure that it has access to the best available expertise for advice and the design of its strategy and materials;

- MI's expertise and credibility is seen to be primarily in salt iodization, vitamin A and food fortification. As it begins to consider playing a key role in a new

[11] Interview with representative of one of MI's international partner organizations.

global program on iron deficiency anemia, it will have to consider how it will strengthen its resources and therefore its credibility to advocate on iron;

- One of the most effective ways to advocate is to build alliances with strong partners and to share ownership of ideas and successes. With whom will MI develop alliances for advocacy on iron? Will MI be prepared to play a leading or a supporting role?

We would recommend that MI should undertake more "critical advocacy". One of the criticisms we heard of MI is that their approach is sometimes "to start with the solution, instead of the question". Another is that they talk to the converted or "convertible" and avoid engaging, or inviting to MI meetings, those who are opposed to MI's point of view. The value of the Beaton and McCabe report on iron is that the results are based on careful science rather than promotion of a particular scientific or medical view, and that dissenting views are given the last word. It is a good example of critical advocacy.

Activities that help different views to be brought into a common framework is a role that is needed in fighting micronutrient deficiencies – and particularly so for developing the most effective strategies to fight iron deficiency anemia in different economic, social and environmental situations around the world. Perhaps, in their contribution to the global program on iron deficiency anemia, MI could work with a group like the Keystone Center to develop some innovative approaches to iron through multi-stakeholder dialogues, that would include individuals and groups who hold (at least initially) opposing views. These opposing views may well be the stumbling blocks of advocacy efforts later in the day, so it is good strategy to map them out beforehand and, with luck, to smooth some of them out in the process.

3.5 Research and Technology

MI's work on research and technology cuts across two of its Focus Areas: *Development and Application of Technologies* and *Resolution of Key Operational Issues*[12]. Its objectives for 1997-2000 were to:

- focus on improving or developing promising technologies for the control and elimination of micronutrient malnutrition;
- help to bring them from the laboratory or pilot stage to large-scale application.
- Identify and support consultation and research to resolve controversies or bottlenecks.

[12] Some of the work in "Resolution of Key Operational Issues" also falls under "Publications" (section 3.9) and "Meetings" (section 6.2.4)

The technologies which MI has supported therefore tackle the key steps in fighting micronutrient deficiencies: (1) knowing what the deficiencies are in different populations; (2) knowing what the best opportunities are for fortifying foods to reach the poor in different social and cultural settings; (3) developing the technologies to fortify different foods; (4) measuring the impact that a specific supplementation or fortification intervention has on people's health status; and (5) going to scale with the technology and transferring it to developing countries. There are also a few projects looking at alternative approaches to supplementation and food fortification. The projects MI supports in this continuum can be grouped into eight areas, with the majority in food fortification technology.

- Rapid procedures for assessing micronutrient deficiency status: for example, field level methods for assessing iron deficiency by analysis of dried serum spots in population surveys; simplified method for measuring urinary iodine;

- Rapid assessment procedures for identifying the best food vehicles to fortify: for example, the development and distribution of the FRAT Manual with PATH Canada.

- Rapid test kits for measuring the micronutrient content of foods: for example, testing iodized salt; assay kits for vitamin A in fats and oils;

- Technologies for fortifying different food vehicles: for example, triple fortification of food (salt, flour and oil); micronutrient beverage for adolescent girls (Bangladesh); sugar fortification with vitamin A;

- Technologies for fortifying foods at local and household levels: for example, fortification trial of maize meal at hammer-mill level (Zambia);

- Efficacy trials for impact of food fortification on micronutrient status of human populations: for example, maternal vitamin A supplement trial (Bangladesh); efficacy trial of iron fortification of soy sauce on micronutrient status (China); impact of sugar fortification with vitamin A (Nicaragua);

- Going to scale in food fortification: for example, national scale flour fortification (Middle East and North Africa);

- Alternative delivery systems for micronutrients: for example, assessment of carotenoid bioavailability from plant sources.

MI supports research and technology development in most of the critical areas for improving micronutrient status. It includes health research on the status of populations for micronutrient deficiencies and the impact of supplementation and fortification interventions on improving their health status. Much of the work is concerned with developing food fortification technologies that can be integrated into industrial food processing. In practice, one of the criteria for selecting a suitable food vehicle for adding

micronutrients to people's diets, is not only the patterns of food consumption, but also the characteristics of the food processing industry in any country for that food. Thus the ideal food vehicle for fortification is a food, like salt, which is eaten universally and which is also processed by a few large factories, so that issues like quality control, compliance and incentives are easier for governments to manage.

We are impressed with the work MI is supporting in technology and research and in identifying some of the key controversies and bottlenecks. We have not been able to judge the quality of individual research projects, but in general the response we heard from the people we interviewed who were knowledgeable, was positive about the technology and research program.

The projects are targeted on some key obstacles to food fortification and cover the spectrum of technology development from understanding the problem, to technology adaptation, to technology transfer and going to national scale. Many of the projects are to develop rapid assessment methods and kits, and we find this excellent. The applied projects also lend themselves to future networking to increase the opportunities for technology transfer across regions. This has already happened to some extent in sugar fortification technology from Latin America to Africa.

Much of MI's networking so far has been achieved through regional workshops on particular technical issues. These include: Women and Food Processing (Ghana 1994), Regional Anemia Consultation for Africa (1997); Food fortification workshop (China); iron deficiency workshop (Chile 1997); Regional Food Strategy in Latin America Meeting; Workshop on salt iodization for small salt producers in West Africa. We are very supportive of this approach, and of MI's work in technology and research in general.

In an evaluation whose findings are tending towards concluding MI needs to focus more, it is somewhat counter-productive to suggest that MI might want to add to its agenda in technology and research. However, there are three additional research themes that we believe would strengthen MI's present scope of work:

- Policy research to examine the national, regional and international contexts for food fortification and to share national experience in legislation, regulation and *economic incentives* to encourage the private sector to fortify foods. A good report in this area has recently been revised and published by MI in 2000.[13]

- Technology transfer and networking. MI is already doing this but it could be usefully expanded to increase the impact of earlier investments in technology development made by MI. One example we have is to transfer and adapt the experience of fortification at the household milling level in Africa to Asia.

[13] Rose Nathan, 2000, Regulation of Fortified Foods to address Micronutrient Malnutrition: Legislation, Regulations, and Enforcement; Micronutrient Initiative, Ottawa.

- Alternative approaches to reach the largest numbers of vulnerable people to improve their micronutrient status. MI is doing some work on alternative approaches but we would recommend that it be expanded in the future.

  In many countries, most poor people do not buy food produced by the formal food processing industry, because it is too expensive. For example, some 70% of the population of India does not eat the food processed by the industry with which MI is currently working (except partly through the public distribution system). To reach them, MI must develop technologies for micro, small and medium enterprises; the household level; and for primary food producers like farmers; as well as work with national and international food aid schemes.

Finally, it is controversial, but the potential benefits of genetically modified rice with vitamin A for human health and economic livelihoods in Asia are so enormous that MI might at least discuss it, and see whether there is any role here for MI in the next five years, given its experience in assessing micronutrient status and food consumption patterns. It is an opportunity for MI to think even more out of the box.

3.5.1 Double fortified salt

One major research activity, started in 1992 and still continuing is the double fortification of salt with iodine and iron (DFS). Some early engineering research was started in India and, with MI's support, a somewhat different approach was initiated at the University of Toronto. The Canadian DFS has been successfully tested in the field in Ghana to demonstrate its stability and efficacy using refined salt that was prepared in Canada and would not normally be available or consumed in Ghana, or the many other developing countries which use coarse, crystalline salt. The challenge now is not only to demonstrate in other trials the efficacy and consumer acceptability of refined DFS, but more importantly, to find a technological breakthrough to double fortify coarse, more widely consumed salt.

MI's work in double fortified salt is quite controversial. It has been described to us as the single most significant activity that MI is working on, and as one of their biggest failures. This reflects people's view that the potential health benefits of double – or multiple – fortified salt are so enormous worldwide that it is worth working "big time" for a breakthrough. On the other side, people are wondering why MI has already been supporting work in this area for over six years and has only reached the stage of one trial in one country (whose analysis and results are somewhat disputed) with salt that is too refined for use in most developing countries.

These concerns have led to three further questions that we have heard posed about MI's approach to this potential high payoff technology:

(1) Why did MI for so long "*put all its eggs into the University of Toronto basket?*"

(2) Why didn't MI work earlier on coarse crystalline salt as the food vehicle?

(3) Is MI's implied approach to development to encourage the world to use refined salt to fit the technology available rather than to change the technology to fit cultural food patterns?

We had hoped to do a case study of the double fortified salt project, but could not review all the files and complete the study in the time available for the evaluation. We believe it would be a useful study for MI to commission, and is one that we know is of interest to the Steering Committee.

3.6 National and regional programs

Some of the most successful parts of MI's activities have been their work in helping to develop national strategies and plans for micronutrients. Their objectives in this area for 1997-2000 were to help mobilize the technical and financial support needed for these plans and to help in implementing specific interventions through program support to improve effectiveness and to increase program coverage. They are also among the more controversial activities that MI undertakes, seen from the perspective of some of their key partners.

The issues are not about whether national programs for micronutrients are important or not – they are. Nor are the issues about the need to provide support to governments to undertake micronutrient surveys and national nutrition planning. The questions are raised about whether this is a role for **MI** – whether it corresponds with MI's comparative advantage and organizational niche – and **how** MI is going about doing national programming. The concentration of national programming in South Asia has also led MI to establish a regional presence there and to appoint National Program Officers, so it has institutional implications as well as program ones (section 6.4).

National programming is highly work-intensive and hands-on for MI. In South Asia, they have been working with national and state governments, the private sector (especially the food processing industry), local NGOs, and donor agencies. They are involved at many levels and in many aspects within each country, including:

- Working at the national and state policy level to position micronutrient deficiencies within national nutrition policy, food fortification regulations, trade policy relating to food, and special programs like food rations for the poor in India etc.;

- Assessing the extent of micronutrient deficiencies, particularly among populations at risk;

- Designing interventions to eradicate micronutrient deficiencies based on studies of food consumption patterns and available food vehicles for fortification;
- Pilot projects and testing;
- Leveraging the financial resources to implement large scale programs;
- Going to scale with state or national programs;
- Monitoring implementation and measuring results and impacts.

MI has not undertaken all these roles alone. It has worked with partners such as UNICEF, WHO, PAHO, World Bank, USAID, and HKI in different parts of the world. But it has played a very hands-on role in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, where it can draw on the resources of its National Program Officers. In Bangladesh, MI fielded a team from Tufts University 1997-2000 to provide support to the government in the Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project (BINP). This group was key to helping the government launch the National Nutrition Program in 2000 through its support to BINP in training, travel, workshops, research and policy advice. It helped to prepare the proposal to the World Bank which received the largest Bank grant ever for a nutrition project – about US$1 billion.

In Nepal, MI worked closely with UNICEF to support the government in undertaking a National Micronutrient Status Survey in 1998, whose final analysis was being crosschecked at the time of our field visit in April 2000. This survey, one of the first national micronutrient surveys, will be used to design a Five Year National Plan of Action for sustained programs on micronutrient malnutrition.

In India, MI has worked at the national level in supporting several government committees dealing with the policy and technical aspects of fortification of staples like rice, *maida* and *atta*, as well as groups working on sugar and edible oil fortification and salt iodization (which has recently re-entered the policy fray as a contentious issue). In terms of integrated programming, it has focused on two states: West Bengal and Gujurat, and has received requests from other states to do similar work.

The accomplishments of MI in the South Asia region, as well as their work in Latin America, Africa, North Africa and the Middle East is truly impressive and a testament to MI's identification of key gaps and opportunities that need to be filled. Its work in advocacy with the governments and private sector in those countries has led to private sector interest in food fortification and the problem of micronutrient malnutrition that was not there before MI led the way. It is probably true to say that in Bangladesh, the success of the BINP was directly related to the work of the MI/Tufts team. We heard many examples, small and large, of MI playing a key role in a responsive and flexible mode – just as they were intended to do when they were first established.

But, there were also important questions raised with us in South Asia about MI's mode of operation in supporting national programs. These are:

- Should MI work more with its partners and act less independently? Is it trying too hard "*to find a place in the sun*"?

- Is MI contributing to local capacity building or is it too focused on getting the job done?

- Is MI helping to develop programs that are sustainable? Are other donors or the governments ready with funds to take the MI pilots up to scale?

- Is MI just too small to get directly involved in implementing national programs?

One of the concerns expressed in India was that MI was encouraging the government to set up a parallel initiatives for micronutrient programs by working directly with the Department of Women and Child Development rather than through the Department of Health, which has already in place Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) facilities at the local level, supported by WHO and the World Bank. Rather than working with another Department, these partners think that MI should be helping to strengthen the ICDS system that is already in place through much of the country.

Another concern is that MI is too hands-on. While it might take government personnel longer to do the tasks undertaken by the MI consultants, and the result might not be as polished, these critics think that in the end, the country's own capacity and ownership of its programs would be more enhanced if they did more themselves. We can't judge this one. We do think, however, that the amount of time spent by some MI consultants/staff on certain national or state programs is not sustainable for MI, nor replicable to many countries. It is just too intensive. And MI's human resources are too limited.

The *1997-2000 Workplan* foresaw two main initiatives that are regional: the fortification of staple and processed food in Africa and flour fortification in the Middle East and North Africa. A third initiative in Latin America to introduce national integrated plans in the Mercosur countries and in Central America was not reported as complete beyond work.underway in Brazil.

Regional initiatives around specific themes such as flour fortification seem to working well. They can build on MI's own expertise and they can lead to valuable networking between countries and the exchange of experience and ideas. The regional work in the Middle East and North Africa on flour fortification is one of MI's success stories and has led to very good collaboration with WHO in the region. Regional networking on specific aspects of food fortification, and bringing the public and private sectors together may very well be a good strategy for MI and one more suited to its comparative advantage than comprehensive national micronutrient programs.

3.7 Publications and web site

The *1997-2000 Workplan* includes publications as part of MI's *Micronutrient Information Management Services.* The only stated publication objective in the workplan is to expand MI's activities in its information clearing-house role, publications and Website. The Information and Communications Unit (ICU) was established part way through the term of the *Workplan.*

3.7.1 Publications

MI produced an impressive number of publications, some of which are highly regarded. These include the joint publication with WHO on *Safe Vitamin A Dosage during Pregnancy and Lactation (1998)*, and the recent publication on the meta-analysis of iron supplementation.[14] At the other end of the scale, the pamphlets giving updates on what is happening on Iron, Double Fortified Salt, the South Asia Project (*Activity Highlights)* and the series on *Fortification Basics* are also well received.

One observation of the list of MI publications on their website is that many, if not most of the publications (at least those that are not proceedings of meetings) are edited or co-authored by MI staff. This we find a surprising use of MI Secretariat scarce human resources and may contribute to the problems of slowness in project review and other Secretariat functions that are discussed in section 6 on Key Operational Issues. It is clearly a question of balance – it is good that professional staff undertakes some writing assignments, but in the future MI might wish to see where the best balance for the organization lies More out-sourcing the tasks of technical editing might better serve MI's objectives.

Many other publications of MI are the proceedings of meetings. On these, we heard some criticisms – mostly stemming from problems in MI operations, which reduced the effectiveness of the publications themselves and put strains on relationships with partners. The complaints were that publications of meetings were long delayed. One co-sponsor of a meeting told us that they had yet to see the final report even though the meeting was held more than a year ago. The delay in publishing the proceedings of the meetings, together with a lack of other follow-up (section 6.2.4) seriously reduces the return on investment in organizing the meeting in the first place. Co-sponsors, participants and consultants expressed their views that MI was not living up to its promise in these cases.

[14] George H Beaton and George P McCabe, 1999, Efficacy of Intermittent Iron Supplementation in the Control of Iron Deficiency Anaemia in Developing Countries; MI, Ottawa.

Other partners said that their views were not taken into account in the final version of a publication. In these collaborative endeavours, where misunderstandings can arise, it is important that MI ensures there is a clear understanding at the outset about what input is expected, what the deadlines are, and how different views and conclusions will be reflected in the publication. Equally sensitive is the question of proper acknowledgements. At least two important partners for MI complained that MI had gone ahead without giving them appropriate acknowledgements or using their logo on the cover.

We also saw examples in the files where a publication was delayed because presenters had not foregone their copyright. If MI organizes a meeting, it should secure such waivers beforehand, and indeed they should be part of the contract with the presenter in paying for them to participate in the meeting. In other words, planning for the needs of the publication should be integrated in planning for the meeting and preparing contracts.

The conclusions that we draw from these findings are that:

- MI has undertaken more publications than it could handle in terms of its in-house resources and this has led to some problems in delays, misunderstandings with co-sponsors, and criticisms from partners which undermine the value of the publications themselves;

- Its most admired publications tend to be the more technical ones, and those produced with key partners like WHO. A few seminal publications like these will further MI's mandate more than lots of meeting proceedings – which should rather be put out almost immediately after the meeting on the Internet.

- Publications and dissemination are not an "add-on". They need to be an integral part of the strategic planning in all parts of MI's program.

MI entered in a Memorandum of Understanding with IDRC Books on March 1 2000 for IDRC Books to manage all aspects of editorial production, translation, book production and initial distribution. MI will be responsible for conception, development, technical review and funding of manuscripts and both will work together on marketing. The agreement allows for full text in electronic form on MI's website, in consultation with IDRC Books.

This approach seems an excellent way to go: IDRC Books have the professional experience and resources in publications than MI does not have in-house. It allows MI to concentrate on the technical aspects of publications and will also lead to a more uniform recognizable "image" for MI publications.

3.7.2 MI Website

MI's website is in urgent need of rebuilding and redesign. We understand that this is a priority for the Information and Communications Unit in the new Strategic Plan –

justifiably so. At present, the website is not interactive; it is rarely updated; and does not provide adequate information on MI activities. The directory of manufacturers does not seem to have been updated since its creation in 1997.

Given MI's mandate, the website is a key means to its advocacy and information work as well as its alliance building. It should become the website for information on food fortification, and one of the key sites on micronutrient malnutrition more generally. MI should consider how its website fits into its overall strategy – as for publications, it should not be an afterthought but a key tool for MI. We would recommend that MI consider publishing all its publications on its website and make them available for free downloading. It can use restricted pages of its website to provide meeting participants with meeting abstracts beforehand and proceedings immediately afterwards before they are made openly available on the website.

If MI sees its future role as facilitating consensus in key debates surrounding micronutrients, how can its website support that role? Clearly, MI could put its resources into convening electronic discussion groups, electronic conferences and various levels of listservs and chat rooms. It needs to discuss these options, not only internally, but also with its partners, to determine the support these initiatives might gather and how they could bridge not only the public-private gap but also the information gap between the north and the south.

In sum, we recommend re-launching the website so that it is a high quality technical resource on micronutrients and a key support to scientific and technical discussion on key issues, as well as allowing partners to share their program planning, upcoming meetings etc. MI should think hard about what resources are needed, both in-house and through out-sourcing, to make the website a success. It should not go too far without discussing its website "niche" with its partners.[15] The past pattern of MI trying to do everything in-house will not succeed in the competitive world of the Internet.

[15] MI should clarify what information it might focus on or maintain on its website with partners like PAMM or ACC/SCN which have a policy of using the Internet to provide up to date information and to stimulate discussion on micronutrient

4 KEY PROGRAM ISSUES

The review of MI's program activities has identified some key issues relating to program management and strategy, which are discussed in this section. These are:

- What is MI's organizational niche? What are its comparative advantages and how should they be translated into program activities?
- By what criteria does MI make program decisions? This question relates to broader program strategy, individual activities, and how MI defines its own role in the activity.
- Partnerships are a key modality by which MI achieves its goals. How does MI manage its present partnerships and how might they be strengthened in the future?
- Capacity building is given short shrift in MI's Workplan for 1997-2000 and in its new Strategic Plan. It may be there implicitly, but should it also be an explicit goal?
- How can MI build on improved monitoring and evaluation of its projects to transform itself into a learning organization?

4.1 What is MI's niche in micronutrients?

MI's new strategic plan for 2000-2005 positions MI as

> "primarily an alliance builder and technical support agency..... it is not purely a funds provider or a procurement agency. The MI is not an implementing agency, a research institution or an information clearing house."[16]

It is important that MI clearly define its organizational role because one of the difficulties it has faced in the past is a lack of clarity, both within MI and with its partners, about its core business within the field of micronutrients. Its focused mandate on micronutrients and the linkage of its mission with the decadal goals of the World Summit for Children has been one of its early strengths. In this, MI is seen as a unique and valuable addition to the international organizations and expert groups working on micronutrient

[16] Strategic Plan for the Micronutrient Initiative 2000-2005, dated May 2 2000.

deficiencies. However, MI's recent program strategy has caused some confusion among its partners about its role and whether its current activities reflect MI's real strengths or are to some extent, duplicating the work of others.

From its strategic plan and our interviews with staff, it is clear that MI sees its niche as advocacy, partnership building, and the provision of funds and expertise. Interviews with its international partners show that they also see MI's role as (1) advocacy; (2) funding; (3) building alliances; and (less frequently mentioned) (4) the provision of technical expertise. International partners and the private sector see MI's comparative advantage as based on its expertise in food fortification, combined with its focused mandate and its status as a relatively new Canadian institution (which they believe brings less political constraints and more possibility to be flexible and responsive).

What is missing from this list of comparative advantages (although not from MI's success stories), is MI's work in supplementation, particularly commodities procurement; and its national and regional programs. These two activities present particular challenges to MI in its relationships with partners and its own operational support to programs.

The commodity procurement activity, especially the rapid expansion of MI's role in the procurement of vitamin A capsules for forwarding to UNICEF for distribution to some 70 countries, has raised questions about MI's focus and role among its main international partners. Although the supplementation activities accounted for more than a third of MI's budget in 1998-99, they are estimated to occupy only about 15% of the level of effort expended on programs by the Secretariat[17]. MI argues, and our interviews confirm, that MI's work in supplementation has brought it both visibility and new contacts. However, it may not necessarily have brought MI credibility as experts in the field of supplementation. MI's expertise in the area of procurement, distribution and supplementation is a question mark for both its private sector contacts and its international partners. In the future, MI needs to do a better job of explaining why, when almost everyone it works with thinks its core business should be food fortification, it continues to play a major role in supplementation.

MI's role in supporting pilot projects as part of national and regional program development is also questioned by some international partners, especially in South Asia, where the partners are working with the same governments (but sometimes different departments) to implement micronutrient programs. Judging from the comments of its partners, the challenge here for MI is to work harder at the alliance building and not to be seen as working on its own. The challenge is also to ensure that it does not take on more work than it can support both technically and administratively.

[17] This estimate of level of effort is given in the MI Strategic Plan 2000-2005 and strictly speaking, refers to 2000 onwards. It does not appear to be substantially different from what our interviews with MI staff would suggest.

4.2 Program strategy and focus

When asked what MI's program focus should be, more than half of MI's international partners identified iron as the priority for the next four years. The remaining responses were equally divided between vitamin A and Iodine (especially Double or Multiple Fortified Salt). When it came to what approach MI should adopt, almost 80% thought that MI should focus on food fortification. Only 15 % thought it should focus on supplementation initiatives, with a few people mentioning integrated approaches. The modalities by which MI should work on **iron** and on **food fortification** were seen to be:

- Working with partners and strengthening those partners
- Identifying gaps and opportunities for others as well as MI
- Documenting results, best practice and lessons learnt
- Capacity building of local institutions and governments

While the numbers are small, the areas that some international partners thought that MI should **not** be in are supplementation, field projects and databases. Rather, they see MI as having a core business and unique expertise in food fortification and building links with the private sector to achieve sustainable results.

What does this mean for MI's program strategy and focus? It jibes well with the new program strategy as laid out in the Strategic Plan 2000-2005, with the possible exception of commodity procurement and distribution. It also helps to explain why MI's key partners have sometimes been unclear what MI's role and core business have been in the past.

One challenge for MI management and for the Steering Committee is how to integrate the Special Projects into the overall strategy. These Special Projects account for 97% of the last year's program expenditures ($26,468,000 compared to a Regular Program budget of $724,000). They have inevitably influenced program focus and workload during the course of 1997-2000 and are one reason for the additional projects undertaken that were not foreseen in the *1997-2000 Workplan.*

4.3 Decision criteria for program management

One of the common messages we heard was that "MI should learn how to say no". MI staff speak of new initiatives being launched, sometimes very late in the day, with repercussions for workload, stress on MI staff and on IDRC service providers - and inevitably also for work quality and results.

One example given is that of the recent Salt 2000 meeting in May 2000 at The Hague. The original Workplan included the organization of a session at the meeting on IDD

elimination. To this were added some preparatory regional meetings for salt producers. As late as January 2000, MI began to implement an idea to prepare a CD-ROM for meeting participants[18]. The task was successfully completed but the rush to produce the CD-ROM reportedly affected the quality of the product. This story is not unique for MI. Sometimes a good idea that comes too late, is not a good idea!

At present MI takes on too many new initiatives when its project portfolio is already full. It also seems to have a developed an administrative style and culture that is not as conducive to efficient operations as it might be (section 6.3). These two characteristics, when combined with a dedicated, enthusiastic staff and an annual budget that is considerably larger than it can disburse suggest that MI could benefit from the discipline of a program management system.

CIDA has been encouraging MI to adopt **results based management** and has developed some indicators that would facilitate MI's reporting to CIDA on its projects in supplementation and fortification. One key indicator developed by CIDA is the *Additional Person-year of Coverage (APC).*[19] The APC can then be used to develop a measure of cost-effectiveness of projects by dividing the APC by the cost of the project to MI to calculate the *Cost per Additional Person-year of Coverage (CAPC).*

There may be problems in using the CAPC in certain projects, such as fortification projects that result in long-term private sector initiatives or new government legislation. It may also be difficult to assign costs and benefits on both sides of the CAPC equation to specific action on the part of MI. However, the general thrust of CIDA's initiative is in the right direction. MI needs some clear criteria for making decisions about priorities and what not to do. This is what MI's donors need for their own accountability and what MI needs to measure its impact and effectiveness and to plan its strategy based on that knowledge.

The question of information systems for program management is discussed in section 6.1. Here the issue is addressed more in terms of program and project management based on program criteria that are important to MI's mission and objectives. MI needs to develop a program management framework that is consistent with these goals and at the same time can provide the regular information that MI needs to measure progress towards those goals. MI needs to know if it is on track at several levels – for individual projects, for program areas or organizational units and for MI as a whole. This is no easy task, as most organizations that we spoke to readily admitted.

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[18] The copies of the CD-ROM were packaged by MI staff up to minutes before a staff member hand carried them to The Hague on the last possible plane from Ottawa before the opening of the Salt 2000 meeting.

[19] The APC is calculated in four steps: (1) estimate the number of people to be reached by the project; (2) estimate the proportion of those reached actually at risk of a given micronutrient deficiency (target population) ; (3) subtract the number of people from the target population who would be covered anyway through other interventions; (4) multiply the number receiving additional coverage by the number of years for which coverage is to be provided in the project (maximum 25 years for fortification projects).

We have already noted in section 3.1 that in its last *Workplan 1997-2000*, MI did not have clearly defined objectives with expected outcomes and measurable indicators, so that it was not possible to evaluate the current work against MI's own objectives. The new Strategic Plan seeks to remedy this with a performance-based management system, using objectives, measurable indicators and timeframes. This is to be commended. We believe that, as a matter of priority, MI should develop its own performance management system and try to have it operational this fiscal year. We have the following suggestions to make concerning the process.

- The Strategic Plan should be integrated with the Program of Work and should include the main criteria by which MI is to manage its performance and the main objectives for 2000-2005. MI's new Performance Based Management System (PBMS) should provide decision criteria for planning as well as measures for reporting progress.

- The decision criteria should include results based management and gaps analysis, both of which have been emphasized by the MI Steering Committee, and are relevant to MI's mandate.

- The Performance Based Management System (PBMS) should be designed with the input of MI's partners. It is recommended that MI consults with its key partners and donors to identify what indicators they are using, or would suggest MI use, to measure key components of a performance management system. It could also bring them together in a workshop on how to measure results in micronutrient programs.

  The proposed consultation process would bring several benefits to MI.

  (1) It would allow MI to identify a pool of indicators which have been tried in other organizations from which to customize its own set to best meet MI's needs;

  (2) Ideally, some of MI's selected indicators would overlap with those used by its partners and donors – both to make its reporting more relevant to them (and *vice versa*); and because the longer terms outcomes and impacts are generally the result of collaborative actions and projects, so it would be advantageous for all partners to use similar measures;

  (3) Such a process would increase the transparency of MI with its partners and would bring direct benefits in learning and improved quality of performance measures to both sides of the partnerships.

- The Performance Based Management System (PBMS) should have a core set of performance indicators. These would include the most accessible ones (inputs, throughputs or activities, outputs) as well as the more difficult to measure (outcomes, results, impacts). They would include qualitative and quantitative

measures and would measure performance at several levels (project, program area, MI). It is likely that a manageable core set of measures would number somewhere between 10-20 indicators. It could include the CAPC developed by CIDA or something similar and should also include a criterion relevant to gender analysis.

- MI could show leadership by sharing its Performance Based Management System with its partners, inviting their input on the performance of MI and the the PBMS itself.

- MI's PBMS will require two major changes: a new program information system linked to a financial system; and a change in organizational culture on the part of MI leadership and staff. Both of these are seen as critical to any PBMS and both will require major effort over this fiscal year.

- Finally, as a longer term goal, MI might wish to develop its Performance Based Management System into a broader MI Learning System, linking project and program performance with program evaluations and inputs from national and international partners. This could be an interactive web-based learning system on fighting micronutrient deficiencies.

4.3.1 What would a Performance Based Management System do for MI?

It is a truism that (almost) any management system will work for an organization if the organization wants it to; and no system will work well if the organizational culture is opposed to it. We think that MI needs an improved management system to help it to be a more effective Secretariat. To work successfully, MI leadership and staff also need to be convinced that whatever Performance Based Management System they adopt, will actually help them to do their work better. This is one reason why we conclude that MI should develop its own PBMS and give it high priority this fiscal year.

The process of discussing criteria, selecting a few key indicators (that are both theoretically valid and practicable to measure) and trying to benchmark their PBMS against those of other organizations will likely increase the commitment of the staff to provide the data inputs and to use the system, because the MI-PBMS will be relevant to their needs. However, to make the system work for MI, some changes will be needed in the organization of tasks and staff roles (section 6.3).

What benefits might a PBMS bring to MI? In addition to helping MI set its priorities consistent with its mandate and objectives and to measure its performance, an early benefit of a PBMS is that it should help the Secretariat to know when to say no, and to say "no" and "yes" more quickly and expeditiously. This is because the decisions would be based on criteria that are related to MI's mandate and objectives, are generally agreed across MI, and can be shared with partners and prospective grantees. Decisions based on

known criteria also bring more transparency to the organization, more consistency from one staff member to another in terms of decisions, and usually more acceptance of them from the outside world. It should also speed up decisions and reduce the amount of staff time and administrative costs spent in responding to outside requests.

The present situation, as we have heard from the interviews, and seen in our review of MI project files, is that MI staff put considerable effort into responding to proposals. Many are sent out for external review and are reviewed internally. From what we have seen in our sample of rejected and accepted proposals for 1999, this technical review is of high quality. But the current process poses two problems for MI: it is taking too much time and there is an negative spiral created when unduly long delays in responding to proposals mean that MI has to be more careful and detailed in the technical review and its response to the proposer.

A clear set of criteria for what proposals will be funded can be set out in *Calls for Proposals* and made available on the MI Website. This will reduce the number of proposals received that fall outside the program priorities. For proposals that are received, the indicators forming the core of the MI-PBMS can allow MI staff to make rapid assessments of proposals and early responses to prospective partners and grantees. Those proposals that get through the initial tests based on the decision criteria in the PBMS can then undergo internal and external technical reviews as appropriate to reach a final decision. Some MI Directors have drafted *Calls for Proposals.* We would recommend that these be finalized once the Program Based Management System is in place. This will avoid MI receiving more new proposals before they have a clear decision-framework in place.

4.4 Management of partnerships

Almost all MI activities are carried out with partners, including international organizations, national governments, and NGOs. Half of the activities in 1999-2000 were undertaken in collaboration with just seven international agencies; and three agencies – UNICEF, WHO and PAHO - are the partners on 44% of all MI current activities. The good management of its partnerships is thus MI's key to program success.

The evaluators heard a rather mixed story from MI's key partners. On the positive side, the partners want to continue to work with MI and find that the more personal contact they have with MI, the better the relationship works. They appreciate very much the work of individual staff with which they have contact. They find MI staff responsive on an individual basis, and see the participation of MI staff in meetings as excellent. But there also are some issues that need resolution. These difficulties are not uncommon in relationships between organizations working in international development, each busy

fulfilling their own mandate and needing some share of the limelight. But MI was set up to be different – to be responsive, flexible and assisting others to do what they do, better.

The criticisms we heard of MI's role as a partner are:

- Lack of clarity about how decisions are made, policies are applied and what input a partner might make to any particular decision or negotiation. As one person put it "*There is confusion about who does what and why*";
- Lack of generosity in giving due credit to partners (this, we may note, goes both ways);
- Lack of sensitivity to partners in terms of their own priorities, time pressures, constraints and need for fair warning of actions that affect their workplans;
- A need to define an appropriate level of intervention for MI and to allow partners to have more influence in shaping the outcome;
- Considerable difficulty in reaching people within the Secretariat, compounded by long delays in getting responses from them.

These problems appear to us to be related to two underlying general causes:

- A difference in perceptions between MI and some of its partners about MI's role within the partnership and more generally, MI's "position" within the international mosaic of organizations fighting micronutrient deficiencies;
- A need for MI to improve its operational efficiency and human resources management.

4.4.1 What kind of partner does MI want to be?

There appear to be fundamental differences between the way MI sees its role and what MI's partners understand MI to be – or perhaps the way they would *like* MI to be. MI sees itself as a catalytic organization, flexible and responsive, an influential advocate for micronutrients sitting at the tables that matter, and backed by technical expertise and financial resources. It sees itself as a good partner. The view from the partners is generally supportive of this image, but with some important caveats.

MI has both the burden and the advantage of being a new organization in the micronutrient field. In working with larger, more established organizations like WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank and PAHO, MI has successfully influenced them to pay more attention to the problem of micronutrient deficiencies. Although MI staff like to stress the value of the technical expertise MI brings to the partnership, many partners see MI

primarily as a funder, albeit with in-house expertise (what one partner called "an intelligent donor"). Some partners feel that MI oversteps its technical role and tries to *"re-design everything"* without allowing its partners to have enough input on the technical aspects. When this is combined with lengthy delays, the partners do not see the "value added" of MI's technical contributions. Furthermore, on occasions they have felt that their own expertise was not respected sufficiently by MI.

Partners would like to see MI helping their organizations strengthen their *own* approaches to micronutrient malnutrition; for example, through MI undertaking the studies which can identify gaps and opportunities for future programming by the larger institutions. The partners believe that, by helping them to change, MI's contribution to the overall effort would be more sustainable in the long term, than by MI building up their own portfolio of programs. This is one reason why WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank are supportive of MI's strategy to place people on secondment in their organizations. They are also very appreciative of the individuals filling the positions.

A related issue in managing partnerships is sharing credit between all parties. There is a feeling, expressed both inside and outside the Secretariat, that MI is seeking to make a name for itself. To do this, there is a perceived tendency for MI to want to "own" and gain credit for collaborative activities by putting its own stamp on them. A number of examples were given to the evaluators where partners felt that MI did not share credit with them. Some of these can be attributed to administration and operational support. But beyond administration, we encountered a feeling among several key partners that MI is sometimes over-anxious to take credit.

The issue of clarity and organizational transparency has already been discussed with respect to MI's niche and the need for clearer definition of its strategy and decision-making processes. The concern here is that the present confusion expressed by some partners about what "business MI is in" and how MI decides what to do, is affecting the relationship with MI's partners. The good news is that steps taken to have some MI system in place for Performance Based Management should also help MI to better manage its relationships with its partners.

4.4.2 Bridging the public-private gap

MI has a strong comparative advantage and track record in bringing the private sector into the global fight against micronutrient deficiencies. Almost all its partners, in both the public and private sectors attest to MI's credibility and initiative in bringing private sector leaders around the table to meet with government representatives and intergovernmental agencies. It is indeed hard to see which other organization in the micronutrient field would be so able to bridge the public-private gap.

Much of the credit for MI so successfully exploiting this niche must go to the Executive Director who has personal credibility and therefore access to key people in the food industries, especially the salt producers. His particular understanding of the perspective

of the private sector and the ways in which national legislation and regulations can be either an enabling environment or a disincentive to private sector commitment to food fortification, has been critical to MI's success so far.

Several private sector representatives have told us that it when they attended their first MI meeting on food fortification, it was like "a revelation" to them to realize that they could play a key role in bringing significant health benefits to children. MI's work with the flour millers and sugar producers in different parts of the world are real success stories for MI. One particularly important meeting, convened by MI, PAMM and the Keystone Center was held in Ottawa, December 6-8 1995. This meeting brought together 120 participants from the private sector, governments and international agencies to discuss a strategy for food fortification on the basis that

> "Micronutrient malnutrition is a global problem. But it will be tackled one country at a time".[20]

However, there are some potential shoals ahead for MI in managing its relationships with private sector partners. One is that the private sector representatives that we spoke to did not understand MI's mission and role as well as did other groups. Their contact with MI was more limited to particular transactions and appeared to be a less broad "partnership" than with other organizations. It is important for these private sector partners to understand the broader context in which MI operates for at least two reasons:

- Their commitment to food fortification is strengthened when they see both a commercial and corporate public good advantage in their participation;

- They are the experts in food production and processing and can play a more creative role in defining strategy and solutions if they also share in the bigger picture.

Another issue that was raised with us was that of the danger of MI being perceived as promoting private sector *for-profit* interests. MI's role in the procurement of vitamin A capsules from Canadian companies has contributed to this perception, particularly in India, which has a national capacity to produce vitamin A. This aspect of their work with the private sector requires special attention to how, and with whom, MI works.

We have four suggestions for MI's future work with the private sector:

- For those companies which derive commercial benefit (including commercially useful information) from working with MI, there should be a policy in place that seeks to have the companies contribute to the public good – and specifically to further the goals of food fortification for poor and vulnerable populations. One in-kind, contribution that international firms could make is to provide training

[20] Forum on Food Fortification, 1996, Sharing Risk and Reward: Public-Private Collaboration to eliminate micronutrient Malnutrition; Ottawa December 6-8 1995.

opportunities for companies in developing countries or even for public sector employees who work in relevant government departments.

- MI should have a strategy and program of work within its advocacy program to promote the involvement of the private sector in fighting micronutrient deficiencies. This could build on the plan of action outlined at the Ottawa Forum in 1995, which included involving the Codex Alimentarius Commission and its regional organizations in developing guidelines and standards for food fortification that would help the private sector and governments to take action.

- MI could seek corporate funds for some of its work in food fortification, particularly from the charitable arms of major companies in the food production, food processing and pharmaceutical fields. Some of the proposals made at the Ottawa Forum would lend themselves to private sector funding.

- Before seeking corporate support for its work, MI should have in place a Policy for Accepting Private Sector Donations approved by the Steering Committee and by IDRC. This would set out the conditions under which MI would accept corporate donations, including pro-bono and in-kind contributions; would prescribe the ways in which corporations can use the donation in their own communications; and would proscribe any imputed endorsement of a company's product or services, or medical qualifications.

4.5 Sustainability and capacity building

One of the questions asked in the interviews was about the sustainability of MI's program activities.[21] It elicited some interesting responses. One was that the notion of sustainability is not really applicable to problems like micronutrient malnutrition because sustainable solutions were decades away for many parts of the world; they are often related to poverty and having good governmental systems in place.

> I think that sustainability is a straw man. Most of the countries are going to need support for years to come
>
> More people need micronutrients every day. More people are born everyday. The problem will not disappear.
>
> When the US Food Aid Program began in 1962 questions were asked about its sustainability. Food Aid is still flowing nearly forty years later.

[21] The question was: "Do you think that MI's program activities are sustainable? What happens when MI funding ends? How has, or should, MI plan for the future sustainability of its activities?" The quotations given are from interviews with MI partners.

> The sustainable elimination of global micronutrient malnutrition is very long term. It won't be wiped out like smallpox. If ever systems collapse, the problem returns. Look at the countries of the former USSR. Iodine deficiencies came back within months.

The keys to achieving sustainable projects are seen as

- Working through existing structures and avoiding creating new or duplicative ones;
- Working with others, working within their goals and procedures;
- Identifying good partners and good projects and work only with those;
- Convincing those with the resources (especially major donors) and the long term responsibilities (governments) to take over;
- Transferring projects as soon as possible to the private sector
- Build the capacity of governments and institutions that will take over the projects.

Supplementation projects are seen as less sustainable than fortification initiatives because the chances are poor that governments (or the people themselves) will be able to pay for the supplements in most of the countries where donors like CIDA and USAID are currently active. Fortification projects involving the private sector are more promising when it comes to long-term sustainability because the cost structures are usually built into the price of the micronutrients added to the food. However, such projects can require leverage, such as initially providing free premixes and machines, to encourage the private sector to take over the initiative. Thus, sustainability does not usually come without some up-front costs and risks to organizations like MI.

Sustainability of projects is closely related to working with local partners and building their capacities to maintain the program in the long term. Capacity building is the other face of sustainability. It seems to get less attention from MI than we would have expected. In the *Workplan 1997-2000* a number of capacity building activities are listed although it is unclear from the reports to the Steering Committee whether they were all completed. These include organizing technical courses on flour fortification; developing training materials for undergraduate health professionals, establishing Iodine Testing laboratories in Africa and developing primary school education materials.

One type of capacity building initiative which MI has used to great success is the "study tour" to build awareness and transfer ideas to key players. One example is the visit of Indian government officials and private sector representatives to INCAP in Guatemala to observe the fortification of sugar with vitamin A.

The Strategic Plan 2000-2005 also does not give much emphasis to capacity building, although the draft workplan for the South Asia Region highlights capacity building as one of the areas that should receive more attention in the future. In Nepal, it is planned to

revise the curriculum of paramedics as well as village health workers to include micronutrient malnutrition. We agree that MI should work more in capacity building. MI cannot assume that it will be around forever in any particular country. It should "build in its departure from day one".

We recommend that MI place greater emphasis on capacity building as a means to building sustainable projects. Where possible, capacity building should be integrated into MI's other program activities. MI should develop a more coherent strategy for capacity building, in consultation with its main partners, targeted mainly at government and the private sector, with sustainability of its programs as one of the measures of success.

4.6 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring and evaluation are often the neglected components of projects and programs, because, although they tend to come later during the lifecycle of the activity, they should be built into the initial inception or design. All too often, monitoring is done hastily and evaluation not at all. Thus corporate learning is severely compromised.

Most organizations were somewhat shame-faced about their own performance in monitoring and evaluating their activities or themselves[22]. From WHO, to HKI, the World Bank, ILSI and ISO, we heard that monitoring and evaluation was something they were grappling with and felt that they needed to do more than they do. So MI is certainly not alone.

The twin dilemmas faced by all organizations we spoke to, including MI, were

- How do you identify and measure your own performance and results when the activities are undertaken with partners?
- How do you ensure that you have the information you need to monitor and evaluate the activities when you have to rely on partners for information?

In response to the first question, most organizations would like to look at the big picture – which is the collaborative endeavour – and look at longer-term outcomes and impacts. The difficulty they face is that their donors –or themselves- earmark funds within a larger project and sometimes want to measure the impact of their individual contributions. As one respondent said

> How do you evaluate the impact of your part of a vitamin A program costing $2 million a year when your own contribution is only $200,000?

[22] The interviews included the question: "How should MI monitor and evaluate its own performance? How is program performance with respect to nutrition/micronutrients evaluated in your own organization?"

Another difficulty is that they have better information about the inputs and outputs of their own part of the program than they do on the results and impacts of the overall effort. Thus they tend to report on their own inputs (dollars, capsules shipped from Canada) and outputs (meetings organized, documents produced, capsules distributed in Nepal). Some organizations that have conducted monitoring and evaluation missions collaboratively with other donors, governments and organizations like NGOs, strongly recommend a participatory approach for improving the quality of the evaluation and for mutual learning. It also can make reporting easier for people in the field, if donors agree beforehand on the reporting format and even the indicators to be used. MI has reportedly had difficulty in obtaining reports on coverage and results from UNICEF on projects funded by CIDA through MI. One of MI's roles could be to strengthen the monitoring that some of its partners do on collaborative projects.

A particular challenge for MI is measuring the performance of its work in advocacy. The measures are usually highly selective and qualitative.

> "How do you measure your impact on someone else's enthusiasm?"
>
> "Customer satisfaction is the key to measuring success for MI".

For example, how do you measure MI's success at Salt 2000? One approach is to think in terms of "imputed impact"- some things wouldn't have happened if MI had not done them. Other measures proposed to us were to claim success if a project "goes to scale" or is still operating well five years after MI has stopped supporting it, or if the people involved attribute the success to MI. In the end, one of the important contributions of sound evaluation is that it can provide the "objective" evidence needed to effectively deliver advocacy messages to governments and the private sector.

We did not have time to systematically examine the track-record of MI in monitoring and evaluating its projects, so our comments are based on some impressions from the files and documents available to us. We did not see much evidence of systematic evaluation or corporate learning by MI from the files we examined. The files we saw did not contain "internal staff debriefings" after MI sponsored meetings, or assessments of consultant performance, or "lessons learned" on closing files. The project database for 1999-2000 does include a field for "lessons" and, although the comments in the field are not always lessons learned, this is an important improvement to MI's systematic capture of feedback on program activities.

Some MI projects, such as the Bangladesh Vitamin A Project[23] have been well designed with respect to baseline studies, project targets, indicators and evaluation measures. They enable MI and its NGO partners in Bangladesh and Canada to assess the progress and impact of the distribution of vitamin A capsules in the country. We also heard

[23] Sian Fitzgerald, 1998, Bangladesh Debidwar Vitamin A Project; Report of the GVAI Review; PATH Canada report to MI.

positive comments from the NGOs about PATH Canada's role in monitoring the projects and in providing technical support and helpful feedback to them in the field.

Clearly MI wants to have information on the performance of the activities it funds and to improve its corporate learning. We would suggest that in the future it ensures that each activity has a component for monitoring and/evaluation designed as part of the project development and approval process. These will include assessment of each meeting organized or sponsored by MI; readership surveys of publications and MI's website; written assessment of consultants' work in the field and their reports; reports on lessons learned when files are closed; and project monitoring and evaluation studies.

As part of its new Strategic Plan, we recommend that MI establish an evaluation framework. It should be integrated with the proposed Performance Based Management System so that evaluation of the past becomes an input into future decisions (4.3.1). Finally, this is the first evaluation of MI as a whole, although it is not the first evaluation that the Steering Committee has asked for. We have not been able to evaluate all parts of MI's activities in sufficient depth.

We therefore recommend that in the future MI and the Steering Committee should:

- Ask for in depth reviews, including "scientific audits" of important projects or aspects of MI's programs and establish a cycle for reviewing the work of the different program units of MI;

- Establish a framework for regular external evaluations of MI as part of the Strategic Plan 2000-2005.

5 STRATEGIC PLAN 2000-2005

The Steering Committee, at its meeting in January 2000, requested that the evaluation team comment on the new Strategic Plan. In our interviews, we asked those involved in the strategic planning process for their evaluation of the process and we have had an opportunity to review the Strategic Plan itself.[24]

5.1 Strategic planning process

The current Strategic Plan is the result of a process that began with a Steering Committee Retreat in March 1999 attended by some MI senior staff and the IDRC Regional Director for South Asia, who was the Acting MI-SARO Director. This meeting established some performance expectations for the next five-year period:

- Gap analysis: develop a process and check list for gap analysis; redesign MI's workplan to reflect a gap analysis paradigm and undertake three country gap analyses within the next year. Within two years MI will provide leading edge gap analysis;
- Performance indicators: establish and implement improved performance indicators for MI's program;
- Information sharing: design strategies and vehicles for regular information sharing with partners;
- Donor diversification: secure three new partners within next two years;
- External evaluation: to be undertaken by June 2000.

These performance expectations provided some clear directions for MI and a few specific targets, but they did not give MI a set of overall objectives for the next five years. Thus, when the task was given to MI staff to develop the strategic plan, they apparently did not have a clear enough framework to be able to grapple with the difficulty of establishing priorities between competing program interests. The internal process was highly participatory with two separate "all staff" facilitated meetings in September and October 1999. The draft document was presented in individual sessions for members of the Steering Committee in New York, Washington and Ottawa in late October 1999. In the

[24] Strategic Plan for the Micronutrient Initiative 2000-2005; version dated May 2 2000

light of the feedback MI received, the strategic plan was then rewritten with the help of a consultant.

When it discussed the new version of the plan in January 2000, the Steering Committee's comments were almost back to the drawing board in terms of the range of different individual views about priorities and approaches that MI should focus on. Most members were not happy with the document as it stood and asked that MI prepare something shorter and more focused with priorities based on cost-effective results, MI's comparative advantage, MI's resources, and the most effective ways of working with MI's partners (especially the major international agencies and donors). It was expected that the shorter strategic plan would be examined again in April 2000, together with a more detailed one year PWB showing resource allocation to each priority and focus area. The plan that was presented to them in April 2000 was rewritten by MI management in the light of comments from about 15 outside people on the January 2000 version. It was finalized in May 2000.

The strategic planning process was therefore long (over a year) and involved two main processes: a participatory process involving MI staff and an iterative exchange of views between the Steering Committee and MI management. We have been told that no one is particularly happy with the outcome but can live with it, and everyone was exhausted by the process. One concern expressed is the real possibility of a "disconnect between the strategic plan and what MI will actually do". With hindsight, a more strategic process might have been something like:

- The Executive Director prepares a "strategic objectives" paper through internal and external consultation;
- Using the paper as a springboard, the Steering Committee decides on strategic objectives and the main priorities for the next five years;
- With this as a framework, MI staff prepare a 5-year workplan or implementation plan;
- Once the implementation plan is approved by the Steering Committee, staff prepares the annual program of work and budget.

5.2 Strategic Plan

The Plan reflects the process and the underlying fact that everyone thinks that MI should focus but do not agree on what the focus should be. The Strategic Plan therefore talks about focus but does not exactly exclude much of what MI presently does – which everyone agrees is too much. It is not clear to us how this Plan will help MI to make the tough decisions - to say "no" more often; to choose between competing priorities; to make the inevitable tradeoffs.

In the current short document, there are few specific objectives, or means of determining down the road how well MI will have performed. There is mention of a new Performance Based Management System (which we agree is needed) but no discussion of

how it might influence the strategy to be followed. It would seem that between the strategic plan and the annual Program of Work is needed a linking document – a five year implementation plan to "ground" the strategy before annual actions are defined.

The focus areas and the major initiatives proposed are generally consistent with what MI partners feel are needed. In particular, the section on food fortification and the proposed 50% level of effort reflects MI's strengths. No one would argue that anything in the Plan is not a priority for *someone* to do – the issue is more, should MI be doing all of what it proposes for itself? The major initiative on iron and the continued commitment to vitamin A and iodine, together with some work on other micronutrients and developing more integrated approaches were all stressed in the interviews as what the world needs. We also heard the need for capacity building which is scarcely mentioned in the MI plan.

A few of the specific proposals are more questionable in the light of this evaluation. One is the "plan for progressive transfer of production capabilities and cost burden to recipient countries [of supplementation]". We are unsure about MI's comparative advantage in doing this and also its practicality within a five-year time frame. Many of the countries where the micronutrient deficiencies are most severe do not have the budgetary or human resources (or industrial infrastructure) to take on these responsibilities in the short term. Production of the major micronutrient supplements is done mainly by the private sector and as some of the necessary technology and processes are protected by proprietary rights, it is not clear how this transfer of production facilities will take place or how MI will facilitate it.

Another concern related to the findings of the evaluation is the proposed work in national programming:

> "In a limited number of countries to (a) demonstrate the impact of well designed and executed projects as models for replication and expansion.....and (b) provide advocacy and technical support to plan and implement large scale programs for potential funding by development Banks".

Again, the issue here is that MI does not seem to have a comparative advantage; it requires considerable human resources to undertake pilot projects or provide technical assistance to implement large-scale programs; and many of MI's partners do not think that MI should be doing national plans or programs.

A good feature of the Strategic Plan is the chart showing expected level of effort to be devoted to each of the focus areas. This eventually needs to be tied also to budget allocations. One continuing difficulty in defining the focus areas is that advocacy (now renamed *Building commitment and sustainability*) is both a focus area and a *modality* for implementation in the other focus areas. Thus, when you add up all the effort on advocacy in all the focus areas, there is some undetermined amount greater than 25%.

The Strategic Plan anticipates some of the internal changes to operations within MI that will be needed to support the strategy. The findings of this evaluation support the notion that changes are needed in the way MI works internally as a Secretariat. Finally, it is not

clear how the new strategy will be related to the existing organizational structure, or if any adjustments are needed to the scope of work of the four Units in the light of the new program.

In its present form, the Strategic Plan does not include the objectives needed to provide a basis for evaluating MI's performance over the next five years. It does foresee internal and external reviews of MI two years after the beginning of the Strategic Plan, and that a Performance Based Management System will be in place to help the evaluation process. This is to be commended.

Regarding the Strategic Plan, we would recommend:

- A set of 3-4 clear, measurable objectives are set for each program area;
- MI should consider recasting "advocacy" as a major modality through which MI reaches its objectives in each program area, rather than as a separate focus area;
- The objectives are linked to targets, indicators, outcomes and expected results in an implementation plan for the five year program;
- The PWB could then be adjusted to reflect the framework provided by the strategic plan and the implementation plan.

6 KEY OPERATIONAL ISSUES

6.1 Information management

Throughout this report, we have referred to the lack of information systems and the difficulty of obtaining information on MI programs. Indeed, we wonder how MI could have performed as well as it has, given what we see as the primitive state of its current financial and program databases. In 1992, when it was launched, MI was entered into IDRC's financial system as one project. Within two years, the amount involved had risen to nearly CAD $20 million, but IDRC's financial accounting structure for MI remained the same. During the following eight years, as the IDRC systems were transformed from RADIUS to EPIK, the various grants that MI received – bringing its budget up to CAD $30 million a year, for a total of over CAD$140 million – were still treated as part of that initial project.

This means that all grants which MI issues are not separately identified in the IDRC financial system but have to be entered separately by an IDRC person into a Quattro Pro spreadsheet which is then provided to MI to enable it to produce financial reports, which is both limiting and time-consuming. The problems MI faced in information systems for its financial and project management were clearly identified in 1997 [25]. Despite its eight-year history and significant budget, MI does not today have the systems in place to provide the information it needs for strategic planning, nor for monitoring and reporting on its grants and activities to its donors.

The financial information provided to the MI Steering Committee (and therefore to the IDRC Board) is inevitably limited. It follows more or less the same format since MI began, and does not, in our view, meet the needs of the Steering Committee for their oversight of the program and assessment of program performance. Expenditures are presented under three categories: Programs, Special Projects and Management and Technical Assistance. In terms of the Five Focus Areas in which MI works, and for which it has specific objectives, the expenditures under Programs and Special Projects overlap so there is no way to determine how the resources are allocated according to the structure of MI's programs.

In order to respond to CIDA's requirement for a detailed report on the use of its contributions, MI developed internally a simple project database for its 1999-2000 projects using Microsoft Access. This database is limited to a few project descriptors (such as country of operations, external partners, project results, project theme) and lacks

[25] Don Sharp, 1997, MI-MIS: Phase I: Needs Assessment; consultant report for MI, July 1997.

accompanying financial data on each project (which are still not available) but it is a quantum leap from what MI had before. It has already proved useful within MI and by the evaluation team, as for the first time, one could gain an overall picture of MI's projects and the results being obtained.

Our strong recommendation is that, as a matter of priority, MI establishes a Task Force and a process over the next few months for identifying its needs for a program management information system. The Task Force should include both financial and program specialists from MI and ideally would have access to expertise in program management systems, including within IDRC and CIDA (Food Aid Centre), as well as the support of a database designer. IDRC has recently introduced a new system – Grants and Project Management System (GPM), which integrates project and financial management into an advanced relational database. MI would be able to use the GPM system in about six months time.

The question that now faces MI is: will the IDRC GPM system meet its needs? Compared to its present state of information poverty, the GPM promises the ability to track projects through their lifecycles, to track the status of donor agreements, to generate electronic documents, to provide reports on projects and to allow some analysis by project type. The current descriptors in the GPM for project type and sub-type are more useful at the level of IDRC than of MI. For example, under project type, projects are classified as *research project, research support project, secretariat, award and within-Centre project.* Would all MI projects be classified as "secretariat" without any useful differentiation for MI? The project-subtype classification includes values such as *seminar, training, dissemination, evaluation, project development.* MI would almost certainly need different (additional) project descriptors.

But the main concern we have is that the GPM at present does not allow projects to be tracked and managed by results or by performance. The GPM would have to be modified to include new fields for the reporting required by CIDA (and possibly also its other donors in the future). The human impact indicators being used by CIDA in its reporting include morbidity and mortality measures, as well as specific indicators on micronutrient programs such as Additional Person-years of Coverage (APC). MI will want to consider how such results-based reporting can be integrated into its overall program and performance management system.

In the light of our review of MI's projects and our discussions with its donors, especially CIDA, together with interviews of MI's partners and MI staff, we have a some suggestions for what we see as MI's information system needs for its performance based project management:

- MI should be able to use the system to generate reports to donors on its progress and impacts so the system should be powerful enough to analyse inter-relationships across its fields to generate a wide variety of reports to meet different needs;

- Indicators of progress towards objectives and the achievement of results should be part of the database and project activity data should refer back to strategic objectives;

- Financial information should be structured so that reports can be generated on the costs of MI activities such as the funds invested in a given country or in a certain type of fortification intervention, so that MI and its donors can judge the cost-effectiveness of different programs and interventions.

In addition, we have a wish list for the future, which also underscores the need to think through very carefully – and imaginatively - MI's new Program Management Information System for the long term:

- The database could help MI to scan the future, the operating environment and the unusual: some thought might be given to a "Foresight Module" which identifies and maintains a watching brief on upcoming important events, related activities of other organizations, new opportunities (e.g. the Rockefeller funded research at IRRI on rice genetically improved to contain more vitamin A);

- The database could be a core resource for corporate learning with evaluation and monitoring information regularly entered and successes and failures tracked, together with lessons learned. It could eventually be linked to the MI Website and be accessible at least in part to partner organizations and to wider MI discussion groups.

We would not wish to prejudge the outcome of the Task Force's work. It might recommend adoption of the IDRC GPM system as it is, or with modifications, as the simplest and fastest solution. It may recommend to MI and to IDRC that MI needs are best met by another database system entirely, or by a supplementary Project Performance Management System that is linked to the GPM; or some other solution that we have not thought of. Clearly, the selection of the project management system will also be influenced by whether MI remains legally a secretariat within IDRC. Our main message is that MI needs an improved information management system tailored to its particular requirements as a matter of high priority and urgency.

6.2 Secretariat functions

The evaluation reviewed four important functions of the MI as a Secretariat: project review and administration; processing of contracts and MGCs; commodity procurement; organization of meetings, and communications with external partners, consultants and grantees. The use of consultants by MI is considered separately under section 6.5 and evaluation and monitoring of projects has been discussed under section 4.6.

6.2.1 Project review and administration

The last year, 1999-2000 was used as a datum for evaluating how MI handles projects. This was chosen because it is the year when most of the present staff was already appointed and because it is the only year for which a project database exists. The evaluators reviewed the project database, the pipeline and a sample of project files.

The findings show that by the end of the fiscal year, the total projects proposals that had passed through the 1999-2000 pipeline were 197. Not all of these proposals were received in 1999-2000 as some were delayed from previous years. This number represents a considerable workload for MI as each proposal needs to be reviewed internally, with a fair proportion also being sent outside for external review. Once a proposal is reviewed, a decision to fund or not may be arrived at within the appropriate Unit, or it may be referred to another Unit and/or the Executive Director, or even to another external reviewer. In many cases, MI staff would ask for more information from the proposers or for changes to the proposal design.

Our review found that the technical review process for proposals was careful and of high quality. Some proposers told us that MI tries to redesign proposals and impose their own technical views too much, but we are unable to judge the fairness of these comments. For some files, we felt that the MI staff had gone almost beyond the call of duty in their technical "due diligence". One result of this careful attention to technical detail is that it is time-consuming.

This meant that the good quality of the proposal review work was marred by long delays in arriving at a decision for many proposals. Of the 197 proposals in the 1999-2000 pipeline, by April 1 2000, a decision was reached on 109 or 55% of the total. This left 88 proposals (45%) still awaiting a decision. Forty-seven percent of these proposals had been waiting for a decision from MI for over a year, with the longest delay being three years (table 6).

Table 6. Time intervals that proposals in MI pipeline on 1 April 2000 had been waiting for a decision

Time period since proposal sent to MI	Number of proposals in pipeline on April 1 2000	Percentage of proposals in pipeline on April 1 2000
2-6 months	22	25%
7-12 months	25	29%
13-18 months	24	27%
19-24 months	10	11%
> 24 months	7	8%
	88	100%

Clearly, many of these problems have been inherited from the past when the staff was smaller, but the situation would seem serious enough to almost warrant a moratorium on new activities until this backlog is cleared up. We were told by many people about delays in processing proposals and that in some cases, there were requests to make changes from MI which did not result in sufficient "value added" in terms of improving the proposal.

We are not able to adjudicate the merits of the decisions on particular proposals, but we saw no evidence in the files that MI was not doing good technical review. However, we do think that MI has to be more efficient in its processing of files, and to ensure that it maintains a reasonable flow of communications with the proposers as long as the file is active. The number of complaints that we heard from partner organizations should be of concern to MI.

Given that MI receives more funds than it can expend in recent years, we were surprised to find several instances where MI reduced the proposed time period of projects, and where MI decided not to use an executing agency to manage a network or to provide technical support. In these cases, MI seems to be taking on more administrative work (for example, in having to process two contracts instead of one) and over-burdening itself in technical support and monitoring when it can't keep up with the workload it already has.

Our recommendations therefore would be that MI deal with its proposal backlog as a matter of urgency, and identify opportunities to reduce the administrative burden on itself. Without second guessing the decisions of the Secretariat, we believe that there are opportunities for reducing administrative tasks by funding larger projects with longer timeframes (rather than cutting proposals into several shorter Phases)[26], and for entrusting some of the technical backup and monitoring required to competent executing agencies, and/or ensuring that an agency with in-house technical competence, has a clear framework for reporting on results.

MI is rightly concerned to ensure good technical quality, fiscal probity and high ethical standards of the projects it funds, but it needs to find the right balance between being hands-on and laissez faire. MI has built up a solid experience with outside agencies and partners around the world, and should now develop partnership arrangements with them that ensure good project implementation, technical support and reporting to fulfill the requirements of MI and its donors. MI staff does not have the time to undertake these tasks themselves – they should be managing others to do them. This is linked both to the need for MI to allocate its funds more efficiently and effectively and their contribution to institutional capacity building in developing countries and among NGOs.

[26] In 1999-2000, MI was responsible for issuing 25 MGCs for a total value of CAD $7.2 2 million (excluding two large commodity grants to UNICEF). When the two large grants for the West Bengal and Gujarat projects totaling CAD $6.1 million are deducted, it means that MI appropriated CAD $1.1 million through 23 projects, averaging only CAD $48,000 million each. A lot of work for relatively small amounts!

As part of its implementation of the new Strategic Plan, MI should consider having service standards for itself as a Secretariat in the services it provides to its donors, its partners and its recipients. These are discussed further in section 6.2.2.

6.2.2 Processing of contracts

MI is legally part of IDRC, a Crown Corporation of the Government of Canada. It must enter into all its contractual relationships through IDRC. In essence, IDRC is entering those contractual relationships and is accountable for them. IDRC, as a part of the Government of Canada and using public funds, must follow a low-risk policy when it comes to entering into contracts and is bound by more rigorous contracting and employment procedures than an NGO or private sector organization might feel necessary to follow. For example, consultancy contracts for CAD$50,000 and above cannot be awarded without going through a tender process. While this reduces the risk for MI, IDRC and the donors to MI, it also reduces the flexibility and speed with which MI can act. Which side one stands on this issue, depends on how accountable you are – and in IDRC's case, it must act on the side of caution and due process.

The legal relationship leads to some strains in the administrative relationship because the internal procedures established over the past three decades by IDRC are designed primarily to process research and training awards through Memoranda of Grant Conditions (MGCs), whereas MI's contracts are less likely to require MGCs and more likely to be consultancy contracts, commodity procurement contracts and grants with large in-kind contributions (for example, the purchase of vitamin A capsules and the provision of vitamin A capsules to UNICEF).

Since MI works with both the private sector and with North American universities on technology development, as well as being involved in projects which administer micronutrients to human populations (especially pregnant mothers and young children) the MI contracts and grants are more likely to require ethical review and/or legal clauses relating to intellectual property rights. Thus the nature of the bulk of MI's work is substantially different from that of IDRC. This was recognized at the establishment of MI, but still raises questions within parts of IDRC.

The processing of contracts by MI/IDRC is one of the most criticized aspects of MI's relationship with its partner organizations, recipients and consultants. Some even go as far as to say that "IDRC gives MI a bad name" or "MI gives IDRC a bad name". It is difficult to sort out where the delays arise on particular cases. Sometimes it is within MI; sometimes it appears to be within IDRC; sometimes it results from a combination of a complicated contract involving intellectual property rights or ethical clearance being processed without enough time allowed and without IDRC having the additional resources on hand to "fast track" it.

This latter issue is particularly sensitive to IDRC service providers and MI support staff, because they feel that "*everything in MI is urgent; everything comes in at the twelfth*

hour; and everything gets changed right up to the last minute." There appear to be severe problems with present practice, even when fast-tracking is not an issue, which need first to be addressed within MI, and reviewed with IDRC to see where improvements can be made[27].

In addition to glitches in practice, there also seem to be problems with the administrative review process. The current arrangement is that MI approves a grant for a specific project after the usual discussions and negotiations with the proposer. The contract is drafted by a MI Grants Assistant. This is followed by reviews by MI program and administrative staff as well as by IDRC administrative and legal services. In all there are some ten vetting stages before the grant agreement is issued to a recipient. This appears to have some duplication and has led a recent Internal Audit Review to recommend reducing the review procedure for consultancy contracts.[28]

The consultancy contracts of MI pose somewhat different problems for IDRC. MI was established at the outset with the idea that "*MI will build a roster of suitable consultants and a capability to undertake the broad range of activities necessary in micronutrient programs*"[29]. Thus MI's method of working is to outsource its project development, project monitoring and technical assistance work to a group of some 20 consultants, with whom they work on a regular basis. These consultants are, in effect, extensions of the MI Secretariat human resources and bring it needed expertise and staffing flexibility. They also provide MI with an extended presence in the field. In 1999-2000 MI consultants undertook more travel missions than all the consultants combined for the Program Branch of IDRC. MI's staffing pattern and modus operandi is thus somewhat different from that of IDRC, although it falls under IDRC human resource policies.

The particular difficulty posed by MI's use of the same consultants for extended periods of time is that Canadian tax authorities may consider that person has employee status with IDRC, irrespective of any terms stating the contrary that are included in the contract. IDRC has to be very cautious in this respect and is reluctant to assume the risk (which may be small but is there) on behalf of MI. We understand that MI and IDRC are now discussing a possible new arrangement, similar to CIDA's "Standing Offer Arrangement" that might help to solve the problem for both parties. This might also deal with a concern expressed by consultants who are hired for several successive jobs, that their original contracts are frequently extended or amended to respond to the new tasks they are given – again causing delays for the consultants and more administrative work for MI and for IDRC.

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[27] One anecdote illustrates the prevailing experience among consultants that we interviewed. The consultant did not use all his accountable advance for expenses, so sent a cheque made out to IDRC for the unused balance of his advance at the same time as his invoice for his fees. He reported that the cheque was cashed by IDRC within three days. His cheque from IDRC for his services took four months to be processed!

[28] IDRC Internal Audit Report on MI, June 7 2000

[29] Proposal for a Micronutrients Initiative presented to IDRC Board January 1992.

In conclusion:

- Client Services Group (CSG) in IDRC has noted a definite improvement in MI's processing of contracts with the appointment of the Grant Assistants.

- MI's Grant Assistants, IDRC's CSG and legal services adhere to performance standards, especially with respect to turn-around times.

- We recommend that MI Program staff also be made aware of these performance standards and be required to make every effort to comply with them as far as they intervene in the process.

6.2.3 Commodity procurement

Since 1997, CIDA has been providing MI with substantial "commodity grants" of about CAD$10 million a year for the procurement of vitamin A (and some iron) supplements to UNICEF or to NGOs for distribution in 70 national micronutrient supplementation programs. The activity is itself an unusual role for IDRC, and initially MI staff had no particular expertise to take on this responsibility. At the beginning, much of the procurement was confided to an external consultant before MI took on the role in-house. Now, that some early glitches have been smoothed out, the activity occupies the time of the Director, Finance and Administration and that of a Program Support Officer for about 3-4 weeks a year each, and the cycle of procurement and distribution with CIDA and UNICEF operates well.

MI's role is essentially a "middleman" between CIDA, the procurement agency (CCC) and UNICEF. Once CIDA makes the grant to IDRC/MI, MI enters into two sets of discussions: one with UNICEF to determine the quantity and dosages that are needed and another with the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC), which is an agency of the Canadian government.

The CCC handles all aspects of the procurement starting with the tendering process.[30] The CCC evaluates the bids, contracts the suppliers, administers the contract and ensures that the correct goods are supplied and delivered. MI is required by CIDA to ensure that the CCC arranges for regular quality control of the capsules and their packaging, and supervises the shipments.

On the basis of UNICEF's estimates of the vitamin A that is required, MI proceeds to make a grant to UNICEF of vitamin A capsules in-kind, together with a cash grant to cover freight from UNICEF's central warehouse in Copenhagen for distribution to each

[30] In practice, only two Canadian companies can produce capsules to the required specifications, in the quantities needed and with the quality control necessary.

country receiving them, and support to the agencies (government or local NGOs) which will be distributing the capsules in the countries and monitoring and reporting on the coverage achieved.

A typical grant, made on July 18 1997, provided UNICEF with up to 150 million vitamin A capsules of various dosages and packing units, with a total value not exceeding CAD$4 million and a grant in cash of up to CAD$1 million for distribution costs. The cash grant is transferred to UNICEF in New York and the capsules to UNICEF warehouses in Copenhagen.

The evaluation team was able to observe the distribution of CIDA-MI-UNICEF vitamin A capsules to children under five years in the mountain villages of Nepal. For Nepal, the end points of this long, inter-agency chain that starts in Canada are 35,000 female volunteer health workers who distribute the capsules for 2 days twice a year to 2.7 million Nepalese children at village corners, outside shops, and in front of administrative ward offices. The children are protected from vitamin A deficiency for another six months, the women (most of whom are illiterate) gain dignity and respect from the community. They hold their scissors (used to cut off the neck of the capsule) as a badge of pride and a symbol of their health care role – not unlike the doctor's stethoscope. It is one example of the empowerment of women to which MI activities contribute.

As has been pointed out elsewhere, while the commodity procurement role is somewhat separate from the other activities of MI and is a far cry from the norm for IDRC, it does give MI visibility in the 70 countries in which the capsules are distributed in containers bearing the MI logo and unfortunately (for health safety reasons) with labels in English and French rather than in the local languages. More importantly, it is probably the activity that directly saves more children's lives than anything else in which MI – or for that matter – IDRC is involved.

6.2.4 Organization of meetings

MI's track-record in organizing successful technical and advocacy meetings in different parts of the world with key groups, including governments, the private sector, NGOs and international agencies is really impressive. We are in awe of their stamina.

However, the number of these meetings does bring an administrative burden to the MI staff – not only in preparation for them, travel and participation in the sessions, but in the follow-up actions required. We believe that MI is probably taking on more meetings than the staff can handle. There are last minute rushes to get background papers together, heavy demands on travel schedules of staff, and considerable stress generated for MI support staff and service providers in IDRC with last minute changes to participant lists and travel arrangements.

Even more of concern for the effectiveness of the meetings to achieve MI's goals, is that MI is not always able to do the follow-up necessary from the meetings. We have heard that meeting reports can be long delayed and not distributed to participants, and planned follow-up actions may not take place. This means that the return on MI's investment in meetings is not as much as it could be, and more importantly, some key partners could be "turned off" MI and left to cool the enthusiasm generated by the meeting without any communication from MI.

The remedies to this situation are fairly obvious to articulate, but harder to implement, since they rely on a change of culture within MI – a change in the way that MI operates as a Secretariat. The first recommendation is that MI plan its meetings strategically, and not get involved in meetings that do not contribute significantly to its objectives. The second is to allocate a task manager to each meeting (see section 5.3.3) to coordinate all activities and inputs relating to the meeting, and to avoid the last minute changes that seem to occur when too many people get involved in decisions. The third recommendation is to outsource the organization of more of the meetings. As we concluded for MI's management of projects, our view is that MI staff should be more strategic in selecting which meetings it will organize and which it will either delegate or leave to others.

6.3 Staff management

MI has developed its organizational structure and considerably enlarged its staff complement since the beginning of 1998. It remained at a complement of four staff from 1992-1996. By the end of 1997-98 it had increased to 11 positions. The next year it more than doubled – from 11 to 24 positions. In 1999-2000 the staff was 34, and this fiscal year it is 39. This means that of the present staff positions, more than two-thirds have been filled within the last two years. This dramatically rapid growth inevitably brings "growing pains" and the need for adjustments and team building, which we recognize take time.

In order to successfully implement the new Strategic Plan, MI needs to move quickly now to reorganize work more efficiently within the Secretariat. The signs are there that new management systems to improve the situation are to be in place in this fiscal year. Our evaluation therefore refers to the recent past and to the present. It highlights two general areas where we think the improvements are needed most urgently: the organization of work and the differentiation of roles. Changes in these two areas will, we believe, help MI to better set its priorities and ensure that they are met.

6.3.1 Organization of work

Our review of the files and our interviews with MI staff point identified a number of problems in the services MI provides as a Secretariat which fall generally under the rubric of "organization of work". These problems relate to underlying issues of time management, teamwork, differentiation of roles and responsibilities and individual levels of responsibility and accountability.

The problems cited to us include situations where *"there are too many MI cooks"* and different MI staff members have contacted outside people asking them for the same information, or gave them different information, with no apparent communication between program staff in MI. Other examples given in the interviews described situations where there was no response from MI to a query, other than that the person who could answer the question was away from the office. Many people dealt with this situation by contacting the Executive Director directly, thus involving him in day-to-day administration.

An analysis of the travel patterns for MI staff for 1999-2000 shows that the travel budget for MI is generous and staff do indeed travel extensively. The average number of days a staff member was on travel status was 62 days. MI management traveled an average of 65 days and staff an average of 56 days. Some of the trips were long: seven trips ranged from 19 to 46 days out of Ottawa. With this much travel, there are going to be times when operations will be affected in a small organization. To minimize disruption, travel needs to be planned and managed, and staff should be accessible electronically when on travel status except in exceptional circumstances.

We would recommend that running three-month travel plans be submitted by all staff and managers for regular review by MI management at their Executive Committee meetings to anticipate potential conflicts well ahead and to better organize the work of the Secretariat. In our experience, the plans have to be reviewed sufficiently in advance that the management's hands are not tied because of external commitments already made by staff members, which are difficult to break. Travel unforeseen in the quarterly travel plans can be dealt with as appropriate by MI management.

It is equally, if not more important to have systems in place that will allow MI to function as an integrated Secretariat. These include a common information system so that any staff member can access updated information on the status of a file, proposal, action or decision, and can enter into the file any action they have taken, or request received. At present, individual staff members are not sufficiently sharing information so that they can back one another up. Internal information sharing is reportedly even less effective between MI Units. Any information system developed for MI is ultimately dependent for its effectiveness on MI staff working more as a team and less as individuals. Given that MI is operating in a fast-moving arena, and aims to be flexible and responsive, the current organization of work has remained the status quo for too long.

We would propose that, in addition to maintaining whatever new program information system MI adopts, staff members are organized as "Task Managers" so that one person, plus a second person as a back-up, is designated as the focal point for each major activity or file. Everyone receiving incoming requests in relation to the activity, including the Executive Director, should refer it to the Task Manager, or to the designated alternate, who can then consult as appropriate to reach any decision. The Task Manager should ensure that all relevant information is entered into the file and would be accountable for the performance of those activities for which s/he is responsible.

Other initiatives which will help to organize the flow of work include structuring the proposal review process by issuing a *Call for Proposals* which should reduce the number of unsolicited proposals, and could also allow them to be processed in one or more competition rounds each year, rather than, as at present, looking at proposals at any time in the year as they are received. We are very supportive of MI's current initiatives to develop a *Call for Proposals* process and would urge that it can be integrated across the Focus Areas and with Performance Based Management criteria (section 4.3.1).

6.3.2 Differentiation of roles

The reorganization of MI into four administrative Units, each with a Director and assigned professional and support staff, allowed MI to organize its work and to allocate tasks to increase its efficiency as a Secretariat. That transformation has still not been completed. What we found is that Directors still have a large project portfolio for which they are acting as Program Officers (up to 7-10 projects each); they are traveling more than the staff in their Units, and they admit that they are not spending as much time managing their staff as they feel they should be. They would like their workload to change and allow them to spend more time on management.

Directors are not very clear on what their level of authorization is, or their degrees of freedom in making decisions. They do not feel that they have much autonomy. The way that MI works at present means that having a specified level of signing authority does not make much difference, because most decisions and most contracts are, in practice, referred to the Executive Director.

The Executive Director plays a very hands-on role. In most files that we reviewed, he is directly involved in some way or other – in making decisions, in contacts with partners, in reviewing the proposals or the final reports – in short, he is often involved in the smallest details. He travels much more than any member of his staff. His capacity for work is phenomenal, but his absences often mean that decisions are delayed. The Deputy Executive Director has been recently appointed to act as organizational "anchor" and to deputize for the ED, especially while he is on travel.

Most of the Program Officers are new appointees and new to IDRC. They are well qualified; they are young; they are enthusiastic and dedicated. They need leadership, on-the-job training and mentoring.

Within the support staff, there are two main groups: Grants Assistants and Program Assistants. The Grants Assistants are responsible for drafting contracts, Grant Agreements (MGCs), Grant Letters and invoices. It is a new position and they are all new appointees. The quality and consistency of the work they prepare within MI, and the working relations with Client Services Group has reportedly improved greatly with the appointment and training of the Grants Assistants.

The Program Assistants used to perform the tasks that the Grant Assistants now perform, as well as more general program support and secretarial tasks. Now they see the Grants Assistants as overloaded with work while they feel that they are underused and "*printing lots of e-mails and doing lots of photocopying*". They are generally unhappy with their job descriptions and their jobs. They also feel that they are not adequately informed about the status of activities by program officers so that when they are the one left to respond to questions from outside, "*and put out the fires*" they cannot do a good job.

This review of what we learned from MI staff, leads us to make the following recommendations:

- Directors should have a reduced project portfolio as soon as possible (even for those who might not want to give up playing the front-line role of Program Officer) and should reduce their travel associated with project development and monitoring. They should focus more on managing their Units and act as the Directors' "forum" for strategic planning.

  Under the leadership of the Executive Director, the Directors together with the Deputy Executive Director are the management team for MI. The establishment of the Executive Committee is a step in the right direction and should be formalized with terms of reference to become the key management body for MI.

- The Executive Director needs to focus more than anyone else on the bigger picture and making the strategic alliances to move MI's agenda forward. He should delegate more tasks to his Directors and should refer incoming questions to the appropriate Unit or Officer. Except in areas related to his own expertise, or for particularly important or sensitive activities, or at the later stages of approval, the Executive Director should not be directly involved in the proposal review process or in dealing with consultants and recipients. He has key representational, resource leveraging, alliance building and strategic thinking roles to play that no one else can do.

  This does not mean that the Executive Director should not be involved in administration at a higher level. The appointment of a Deputy Executive Director is a good and necessary decision, given the nature of MI's work and the size of its budget, but it should not absolve the Executive Director from being responsible and accountable for the overall administration of MI as well as the performance of its programs.

- The Program Officers that are new to MI and to IDRC, need more training in IDRC procedures. This training was offered by IDRC Service Providers last year but was not taken up by all of them. In the light of the reports we heard from different service providers in IDRC, it seems clear that more orientation and training is needed to improve MI's use of IDRC services.

  More generally, MI has a high proportion of new Program Officers and could benefit from renewed effort in collaborative work and team building, as well as some time management training. Finally, program staff needs more clarity about their degree of autonomy – when they can, and should take decisions, and when they should consult or refer an issue to their supervisors.

- There is a problem of work distribution between the Grants Assistants and Program Assistants and a need to rewrite the job descriptions of the latter. Some of the difficulties faced by the Program Assistants are structural – part of their old jobs has been reassigned – others relate to the need for new program officers and Directors to be oriented to MI and IDRC organizational procedures and norms. The Program Assistants are often left to deal with problems created by others, without the authority or autonomy to do little more than apologize.

The problems described above are not unexpected in any situation of such rapid organizational growth as MI has undergone. But they are inhibiting the efficiency, the team spirit and the morale of MI, so they do need the urgent attention of MI management.

6.3.3 Executive Committee

MI created the Executive Committee in April 1999. Its members are the Executive Director, the Deputy Executive Director, and the five Directors, including the Director, MI SARO, who participates by telephone. It meets once a month. We have seen no terms of reference for this committee but a review of its minutes indicates that it serves as a means for the management team to exchange information, to consider staff and administrative issues as they arise, and to discuss MI-wide concerns such as the recent strategic planning exercise.

We think the Executive Committee is a valuable forum for the MI "management team" and would suggest formalizing its terms of reference and its frequency of meetings. Its agenda should be posted for all staff beforehand so that they can provide their ideas and input to their Directors and the minutes, except for personnel issues and other *in camera* discussions should be normally shared with staff. This was reported to us as a somewhat contentious issue by staff. The comparison was made with their access to the minutes of the IDRC Senior Management Committee, but not to the minutes of the MI Executive Committee, which is closer to home. Given that internal communications within MI could be strengthened, MI management might wish to use the Executive Committee as one mechanism for achieving that end.

6.4 Regional staff

MI established an office in New Delhi in 1997, located in IDRC's Regional Office for South Asia (SARO). It had a difficult beginning with the first Director resigning her position after less than two years, followed by the position being left vacant for a year. A new Regional Director has taken up the position in April 2000 and has already achieved remarkable progress in staff morale and regional strategic thinking.

The rationale of focusing MI's effort in South Asia has not been questioned by any of the people that we spoke to. South Asia accounts for 22 percent of the world's population and 50% of the world's micronutrient deficiency problems. The strategy of placing MI staff in the countries, and particularly the purpose of establishing a regional office raises more questions.

6.4.1 Role of regional staff

Basically, one's point of view seems to stem from whether you think MI should be involved in national programs or not. If you do, then having a MI National Program Officer in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (and possibly in Pakistan in the near future) makes good sense. They can do what IDRC Regional Program Officers do – be closer to projects to help them, undertake monitoring and technical assistance, provide representation for MI in the many workshops and inter-agency and inter-departmental meetings that take place, be a "scout" for MI for good new initiatives, and undertake "needs assessment" and "gaps analysis".

All these roles are well played by the MI National Program Officers (NPOs). They are strategically located to influence government policy and to advise on program implementation. They have played key roles in bridge-building between the public and private sectors and have worked with local food industries including the millers and sugar producers in India. Some of MI's best work has been achieved in the region with their support.

One of the dangers of MI having its officers placed in country offices is that they sometimes are drawn close to the fine line between advising on projects and actually helping to execute them. Government resources in nutrition in Bangladesh and Nepal are so limited that MI NPOs have helped to draft project proposals, government planning documents and act as members or even secretaries of government committees. This means that they have less time for their other duties and that capacity building within the government and local institutions is delayed. The counter argument is that these countries need hands-on support at this time if any progress is to be made in fighting micronutrient malnutrition.

We support the decision of the Regional Director, which we understand is to reduce the amount of "hands-on" work undertaken by the NPOs and to encourage them to work closely with the key international partner agencies in the region as well as directly with the government departments. It is important that MI is not seen as trying to go it alone in the region, as at the end of the day, MI does not have the human resources or the access to government that allows it to be effective outside of its partnerships.

6.4.2 Role of MI SARO

The role of the MI Regional Office in New Delhi (MI-SARO) is more difficult to understand in the present operational style of MI. MI-SARO provides financial and administrative support to the NPOs and with the appointment of the new Regional Director and a Senior Regional Program Officer, it has the capacity to provide technical support and regional planning for MI activities. However, no one was able to tell us what the MI budget for the South Asia region is, which would seem to an important component of a regional strategy. What is not clear to us is how the Steering Committee and MI Senior Management see the role of MI-SARO. Presumably with a staff of 5-7 professionals in the region[31], MI Ottawa does not need to be so active itself in South Asia.

The reality seems to be that there are two MI Programs in the SARO region: one run out of Ottawa and the other based in the region. Ottawa is responsible for the provision of micronutrient products in South Asia. In addition, consultants are contracted to go on missions in the countries by MI-Ottawa without consulting or even informing the NPOs. Some consultants are reported to arrive in the region and ask for meetings with MI's partners without the NPOs having sufficient warning to act as liaison. The recent project for a continuation of the Tufts University work in Bangladesh was almost finalized in Ottawa before the Regional Director was consulted. Communications between Ottawa MI and MI-SARO need to be improved.

One important concern is that opportunities may be missed by MI staff in Ottawa to do more capacity building in the region by using local institutions and consultants instead of international consultants. The NPOs are best placed to advise MI on these opportunities.

The questions MI needs to ask itself are:

- Is MI regional strategy for South Asia to be bottom-up (driven from the field) or top-down (led by Ottawa)?
- What is MI's strategy in the region?
- Is it something more than three or four country strategies?

[31] The Regional Director, Senior Program Officer, three NPOs and a Vitamin A Regional Coordinator to be appointed this year (plus a possible NPO in Pakistan)

These questions are asked not only in MI-SARO, but were also posed to us by some of MI's key partners in the region. These partners are not clear what the role of the MI NPOs is and what they can agree to without referring the matter to Ottawa or MI-SARO. The NPOs appear at present to have little autonomy or authority, which reduces their ability to be responsive to any initiative or request no matter how small the budgetary implications and how large the potential advantage for MI programs and presence. Clearly the situation needs early resolution by having in place a clearer understanding of the roles of MI-SARO and MI-Ottawa *vis a vis* one another and in relation to the work of the NPOs. Our own view is that MI will be missing an important opportunity if it establishes a regional and country presence and then does not use it to strengthen and lead its work in South Asia.

6.4.3 Regional Advisory Committee

MI/SARO convened a Regional Advisory Committee which has held three meetings between 1998-2000. The mandate of the committee was to periodically review progress of MI's program activities in the region and to advise the Regional Director on the scientific, technical and administrative arrangements of MI activities. The composition of the committee included regional representatives of UNICEF, the World Bank, UNCHR, WHO and ICCIDD as well as local NGOs and private sector representatives. At their meetings, they reviewed reports on activities in each country and discussed issues such as the use of international consultants. They also proposed that there should be national committees for MI.

While it is not clear what the impact of the committee's deliberations were on MI programs directly, the committee is a useful means to broaden MI's constituency in the region and to share information at a senior level with regional representatives of MI's international partner agencies.

We support the Regional Director's plan to establish MI National Committees and a new, broader-based Regional Advisory Committee. The members of these committees can be drawn on for advice not only at their formal meetings, but also as a group of senior advisors and local sounding board to the Regional Director. They can be asked to comment on the Regional Program of Work and on new initiatives. We would also propose that there is some link established and some information flow between the national and regional committees and between them and the Steering Committee. In the past, the two groups seemed to have been barely aware of one another.

6.5 Consultants

MI's relationship with its consultants has been mentioned in various parts of this report. MI uses consultants as a key means to achieve its objectives. In this, it is different from IDRC and was always conceptualized as being so from its inception. The regular consultants attached to MI are really extensions of its human resources. Many identify closely with MI and feel they are "MI". Their prior experience and their missions for MI have given them considerable insight into the environment in which MI is operating – at the national and international levels. But they lack the mechanisms to contribute to the "bigger picture" for MI. They are generally eager to help MI in ways that go beyond their individual consultancy assignments. They keep on working for MI despite their numerous complaints.

Consultants provide technical assistance to MI's projects; do project development and monitoring; act as troubleshooters, organize meetings and represent MI in different countries and at many events. Some have played key roles in helping MI to forge closer working partnerships; others have increased the distance between MI and its partners. Some are judged to be outstanding in their technical and capacity building skills; the competence of others for the task at hand has been questioned. MI consultants have a lot to offer MI. The reality is that, in many situations, consultants are the public face of MI.

Given MI's reliance on consultants, it needs to think more strategically about how to use these extensions of its own human resources. Some can act as sounding boards and senior advisors and could usefully be drawn into broader strategic discussions with MI management and staff. The recent strategic planning exercise did not use this resource as much as it might have. Others could be asked to scan the horizon for MI on particular problems on which MI should be keeping a watching brief. Others could be invited to MI staff meetings, to integrate their work into that of the Secretariat team and to contribute to its vision.

Other consultants, that are regularly undertaking missions for MI should receive feedback on their work, and even have performance appraisal reports, so that there can be communication between MI and the consultants on what they do. Several consultants said that they did not receive any feedback on their work other than the tacit approval implied in their being rehired. These evaluations can be built into their contracts. The value of some system for evaluating the consultants' work (including asking the people that they work with) is also to deal with the questions being asked about the quality of some MI consultants.

What it may mean is a reconsideration of the contractual status of consultants under some longer-term retainer status (section 6.2.2). This may also help with some of the consultants' bitter complaints about an "attitude" problem in IDRC. Flashpoints in the situation are IDRC's policy that staff can travel business class on long-haul flights to Africa and Asia but not consultants (some of whom are traveling more often than staff to do MI work) and "unreasonable" policies such as not paying for visas on the basis of

reasonable and accountable expenses.[32] When consultants try to negotiate these terms, they meet not only inflexibility but also negative attitudes such as *"You get enough money from your fees – you should pay for the additional travel costs yourselves"*.

The consultants also universally complained about IDRC/MI's administrative requirements and slowness in getting contracts signed and invoices paid. We have not been able to systematically identify where the problems in slow administration lie, but MI management needs to work with IDRC to improve the situation, as it is clearly not limited to a few individuals (section 6.2.2).

One criticism we heard of MI was that it used mainly Canadian and American consultants. In practice, many of its developed country consultants are from North America but when we checked with partners in Europe, they confirmed that most of the expertise in food fortification, in particular, was in North America. MI does also use consultants from the regions in which it works and these are generally well received. However, MI might wish to consider diversifying its current complement of regular consultants, with an eye to additional expertise and possible opportunities to increase donor diversification.

Our findings lead us to conclude that MI will continue to use consultants rather than expanding its in-house resources significantly (which it would otherwise have to do) because they bring a greater range of expertise and experience, and are more flexible to use in human resource planning. The consultants should be managed by results (i.e. have specific goals for their work and be evaluated on their performance) and IDRC/MI should reconsider the contractual and other arrangements that it has in place for them.

[32] The current IDRC fixed rate charge of CAD $150 for visas, ground transportation and airport taxes is inadequate for missions that include visits to several countries (e.g. a visitor's visa to Bangladesh is $80, India $63, Nepal $40).

7 FINANCIAL ISSUES

At first glance the financial picture for MI looks very rosy. The 1999-2000 program appropriations for MI were CAD $27 million dollars[33] out of a total annual budget of CAD $37,858,249. By 1 April 2000, MI had accumulated a positive balance of CAD $41,414 for its programs and operations beginning in 2000-2001[34]. The high income also allowed the ratio of operational expenses to program funds disbursed (always a key criterion for auditors and donors alike) to be very favourable for MI (only 10.6% of actual management and program costs for 1999-2000 or 4.5% of total revenue of CAD $71,841[35] for the same year. The balance sheet would seem to be very positive for MI.

It is. But there are some important financial issues for MI behind the numbers.

7.1 Financial status and donor support

Table 7 shows the growth in contributions to MI from its donors between 1992-2000. It shows a rapid increase in contributions since 1996: from CAD$13.3 million in 1996-97, contributions to MI have tripled to CAD$37.8 in 1999-2000. The total contributions to MI from its nine donors in the nearly eight years of its existence have been over CAD $140 million. Of this amount, CIDA has provided just over 88%. Of the remaining 11.9%, the multilateral organizations have provided 7.7%; IDRC has given 2.7%; and the private sector (ILSI) has given 0.1%. Thus MI has received almost 91% of its funding from the Canadian government.

MI has received funds consistently from its core donors (CIDA, World Bank, IDRC, and UNICEF). It has not attracted funds from bilateral donors except CIDA and one small contribution from USAID. Despite the large resources currently on hand, MI's financial situation could be seen as somewhat precarious. It is overly dependent on one generous donor, CIDA; it is seen by bilateral donors, multilateral partners and almost everyone we spoke to, except its core sponsors, as a "Canadian institution". This presents a challenge to MI as it seeks to diversify its funding.

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[33] This compares with approximately $70 million available in 1998-99 for all the Regular Programs of IDRC.

[34] Approximately $13.2 million of this sum is encumbered.

[35] The contributions to MI in 1999-2000 were CAD$37.85 million. The accumulated balance from previous years' contributions was CAD$33.98 million giving a total available revenue of CAD$71.84 million for 1999-2000.

Table 7 Financial Contributions to MI 1992-2000
(Canadian dollars)

DONOR	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-2000	TOTAL	%
IDA	4.000,000	12,000,000		14,280,000	11,350,000	18,350,000	29,500,000	34,400,000	**123,880,000**	88.
VB	301,483	647,475	805,000	1,084,000	1,285,169	1,394,350	2,900,000	1,550,795	**9,905,010**	7.0
DRC	1,527,566			500,000	500,000	500,000		800,000	**3,827,566**	2.7
NICEF				68,750	203,250	245,200	76,500	96,012	**817,962**	0.6
NOPS				70,413					**70,413**	0.1
LSI						172,569			**172,329**	0.1
SAID						34,575			**34,815**	<.1
VFP							7,600		**7,600**	<.1
FPRI								32,496	**32,496**	<.1
nterest						83,966	877,677	978,946	**1,940,589**	1.4
OTAL	**5,957,299**	**12,647,475**	**805,000**	**16,003,163**	**13,338,419**	**20,780,660**	**33,311,777**	**37,858,249**	**140,688,708**	10

Another aspect of MI's financial situation that is cause for concern is the pattern of expenditures compared to contributions (table 8). Since 1994-95, MI has gone from a deficit on the annual expenditures compared to contributions for the fiscal year to unspent contributions in each of the last four years. For 1999-2000, MI received CAD $37.858 million in current contributions from its donors and had total expenditures of CAD $30.426 million, thus accumulating CAD$7.432 million for the year. This added to the previous accumulated balance of CAD $33.982 million, left MI with a total unspent budget of CAD $41.41 million on April 1 2000. About CAD $13.2 million of this is already committed to pay the outstanding balance on signed contracts, leaving a fund balance of CAD $28.2 million. Of this amount we understand about $9.3 million is needed for operational and staff costs over the next two and a half years. This would leave about CAD $18.9 million available for new program appropriations.

This accumulation of CAD $18.9 million unspent revenue underscores the need, expressed elsewhere in this report that MI needs to find new, more effective ways to work. The current style of MI staff operations is to be very hands-on - to get involved in organizing travel for meetings and consultants, to write reports and to edit publications, to attend many meetings themselves – while the contribution money does not get translated into programming. It is certainly true that some major CIDA contributions have been made rather late in the fiscal year so that there was some inevitable holdover to the next fiscal year. But the pattern for the last four years has been to allow the unspent funds to accumulate dramatically.

Table 8 Annual contributions and expenditures for MI 1994-2000 (millions of Canadian dollars)

	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
Total contributions	$805	$16,003	$13,338	$20,780	$33,384	$37,858
Total expenditures	$10,878	$18,639	$5,883	$19,505	$24,822	$30,426
Difference	* - $10,073	* - $2,636	+ $7,455	+ $1,275	+ $8,562	+ $7,432
Accumulated balance			**$16,775**	**$24,232**	**$25,493**	**$33,982**

* In practice there was not a deficit because MI had a positive opening balance from previous years.

MI's financial status is seen by its partners as one of its greatest strengths – MI has the financial support of CIDA and the institutional support of IDRC to take major initiatives in programs. We do not see where MI has in hand the program or operational strategy to seize the financial advantage that it has. From our interviews with MI staff and our review of files, we see almost the opposite – an increasing tendency for staff to take on tasks like monitoring and technical assistance that could be undertaken by partner institutions and network coordinators; and a tendency to want to reduce the timeframe for contracts rather than increase them, so that MI can have greater control.[36] We think that MI can better achieve the quality of projects and consultancies that they fund by more advance planning and by ensuring that the participating partners meet appropriate reporting requirements.

7.2 Fee for service activities

The Secretariat has taken on a few activities on the basis of charging a fee for its services. The proposal is that this mechanism allows MI to work with organizations that may become donors in the future. We do not doubt that MI has expertise in-house, as well as in its roster of consultants, to provide a range of services for which outside organizations, such as the Regional Development Banks, would pay. We believe that such an approach to diversification of funds is fraught with risks for MI in its current situation.

Our main concerns are that MI would be directing staff time and resources to activities that are not necessarily MI's priorities and would overburden staff that is already unable to perform all the tasks in MI's *Workplan.* It does not seem to make much sense to execute service contracts when the shortage in MI is not funds, but staff time. Even where the services for which fees would be paid are congruent with MI's own priorities,

[36] We did not have time to quantitatively verify this from a large enough sample of files, so it is a qualitative impression from a few examples and from the interviews.

proposals have to be prepared and technical and financial reports written. This inevitably entails additional work for staff. Any such arrangements should probably be very limited and have significant benefits in making strategic alliances and not primarily undertaken to diversify the funding base.

7.3 Future diversification of funding

The Steering Committee asked the Secretariat to diversity its funding sources because, despite its current positive financial position, MI cannot take it for granted that any of the current donors would provide contributions indefinitely. At its retreat in March 1999, the Steering Committee gave them a target of three new donor partners before March 2001. Attracting additional financial donors would increase the multilateral character of MI, which is important, not only to MI but also to its main donor.

MI is in a Catch 22 situation here. CIDA's support is somewhat dependent on MI having other donors, but other donors are not as attracted to support MI when it is so well supported already by CIDA. Other potential donors see MI as a Canadian institution, and one that could also act as an instrument of the Canadian government. Some are reluctant to join a group of donors where their point of view may be given less weight than that of the major donor; others have genuine difficulty in supporting an institution which both legally and perceptually part of the Canadian government.

In developing a donor diversification strategy, we would recommend that MI first significantly reduce its accumulated reserves, since potential donors will want to see its financial books. Donors are more likely to come on board for a program initiative that they have helped to design and which meets some of their own institutional goals. Donor psychology is such that they each like to be in on the ground floor on multi-donor initiatives and feel that they can each claim ownership and credit.

We would recommend that MI should consider developing its new global initiative on iron with an eye to also diversifying its own working and financial partnerships. Some of the lessons in this evaluation for MI on how to manage its partnerships and how to change MI's organizational culture may help MI to integrate its future program and funding strategy.

MI's legal status may also influence whether potential donors to come on board. It is very difficult for either bilateral donors or for the private sector to contribute substantial funds to MI when it is part of IDRC, and thus, an agency of the Canadian government (section 9). Before taking any legal steps to change its status, MI could also consider enlarging the Steering Committee from its present core donor group, and making use of consultants who are well placed to open doors to potential donors (particularly European donors and the private sector). We have suggested elsewhere that before MI makes a major overture for support from private corporations, it should have an approved policy in place for accepting corporate donations.

It is never easy to raise funds and MI will need to involve its present sponsors and outside expertise. It has already elicited the assistance of IDRC's Partnership and Business Development Office for particular revenue diversification events, such as the March 1998 "Oslo dinner" for donors. Although MI has some major hurdles to overcome, it also has the overwhelming advantage of its focussed mission to fight micronutrient malnutrition.

8 GOVERNANCE

This evaluation did not have governance specifically mentioned in its initial terms of reference, but in our discussions with members of the Steering Committee and the Executive Director, and in other interviews, it has been raised as one of the questions facing MI that we should address in the light of the evaluation findings. In particular, we were urged by members of the Steering Committee itself, and by others, to review the role and functioning of the Steering Committee itself. Every organization is profoundly influenced by its governance system and institutional character. MI is no exception. Its relationships with its donors, partners and staff are framed by its institutional status and the character of its governing bodies.

8.1 Accountability structure

MI is an international secretariat within IDRC. It was the first such arrangement with donors that IDRC entered into in 1992. Secretariats are a mechanism to enable donors to pool their financial resources while retaining direct input into the program of a collaborative initiative. IDRC provides a range of support services to the Secretariat and acts as the host institution.

The Secretariat has its own identity and organizational structure but its legal status is that it is part of IDRC and its staff is normally employed by IDRC. Each Secretariat has its own Executive Director who reports to the President of IDRC and to its Steering Committee, on which its donors usually sit. Since the establishment of MI in April 1992, IDRC has hosted fifteen International Secretariats at its headquarters in Ottawa and at its regional offices around the world. IDRC hosts MI in Ottawa and MI's South Asia Office at the IDRC Regional Office for South Asia, located in New Delhi.

We found in the course of our interviews that very few people understand the nature of International Secretariats at IDRC, nor that MI was one. Many were confused about the legal status of MI and of the relationship with IDRC as host institution.

MI is accountable to, and reports to three bodies or groups:

The Steering Committee oversees all program matters. It also nominates the Executive Director to IDRC which then appoints him.

"It approves the secretariat's program of work and budget, reviews program policies, strategies and priorities and assesses the performance of the secretariat against established benchmarks, and recommends, supervises and assesses the performance of the Executive Director. The Steering Committee also establishes the parameters of the Executive Director's authority to solicit funds and conclude funding agreements with other donors."[37]

- The President and Board of IDRC are responsible for ensuring that MI has sound financial and administrative management. IDRC assumes accountability to both individual donors and the Steering Committee in non-program matters. IDRC signs all funding agreements on behalf of MI and is therefore accountable for all funds expended.

  "The President of IDRC is responsible to the IDRC Board of Governors for reporting to them on MI and for the positions that IDRC takes as a member of the Steering Committee. The Executive Director is required to present to the IDRC Board an annual report that relates the work of MI to the program of work that was approved by the IDRC Board when the Secretariat was established."

  "For its part, IDRC is responsible to the Steering Committee for ensuring that all legal, financial and administrative rules are followed; for providing timely and accurate financial reports; and for reporting management deficiencies that might hamper program performance."

- MI's donors MI is in practice responsible for reporting to its individual donors on the use of their funds, both in terms of program results and administration.

  At the same time, IDRC is legally accountable to MI's donors for ensuring that it follows sound policies and administrative practices, and that "there are regular independent assessments of program results against recognized objectives."

  In a broader and less determinate sense, MI is also responsible to its partners for its performance because it works closely with them in its programs, but that aspect is dealt with elsewhere in the report.

Four things strike us looking at this set of accountability relationships:

(1) The structure is complex with reciprocal and parallel responsibilities;
(2) It does not appear to be well understood by all of the principals involved;
(3) The President of IDRC is probably the most accountable person within this whole set of relationships;
(4) The critical role for making the accountability structure work is that of the Executive Director.

In practice, there are some difficulties in how this accountability structure presently operates.

[37]IDRC, Secretariats at IDRC, Ottawa, March 2000

8.1.1 Accountability of Steering Committee

The Steering Committee receives reports on important aspects of the Secretariat's work at each of its meetings (normally two face-to-face and two teleconferences each year). This includes reports on program activities from the Executive Director and financial reports. In terms of its **programs**, the Steering Committee receives a narrative report structured along the lines of the main focus areas, but which is not as systematic as it might be to cover all aspects of the Workplan.

We think that a more useful approach would be for the Secretariat to report by reference to some approved program document such as the Strategic Plan, the Program of Work and Budget, or the Performance Based Management System. If it received a systematic report by objectives or results once or twice a year, the Steering Committee would have a better measure of the progress being achieved to provide oversight and direction. The challenge for the Secretariat would be to make such a report digestible and informative for the Steering Committee, and to link the report by objectives to contextual information on achievements, setbacks and delays.

Reviewing the minutes of the Steering Committee meetings, we believe that the Steering Committee could have helped itself perform its role better if it had systematically asked the Secretariat for reviews and evaluations of different aspects of MI's programs over the past eight years. We would recommend that a cycle of such program reviews of all major strategic areas be established by the Steering Committee.

The **financial information** presented to the Steering Committee (originally by IDRC and now by the MI Director of Finance and Administration) follows more or less the same format since the inception of MI. Currently, expenditure reports set out the expenses in three broad categories: *Programs*, *Special Projects* and *Management and Technical Assistance*. As has been pointed out in section 7.1, there is so much overlap in the activities funded under *Programs* and *Special Projects* that there is no way the Steering Committee can determine from the financial reports how much money was spent on major program areas like advocacy or on supplementation.

We recommend that financial reporting to the Steering Committee (and therefore also to the Board of IDRC) be consistent with the main program areas and strategic objectives.

There is no indication in the minutes of the Steering Committee if the Executive Director reports to it on his own actions. We would recommend that this take place annually, *in camera*, so that the Executive Director can report on his stewardship of the Secretariat and what particular challenges arose. The Steering Committee can use this occasion to provide feedback to the Executive Director and provide their input to his Performance Appraisal Report that is prepared annually by the President of IDRC.

8.1.2 Accountability of IDRC

IDRC is accountable for the good management of MI and of its funds. IDRC enters into all contractual relationships on behalf of MI with donors, suppliers, consultants, and recipients. IDRC also provides financial accounting and payroll services, human resources management, information management, physical space management, legal services and travel services. It is thus in daily contact with MI on these matters and is abreast of all needs and problems arising.

The IDRC Board is expected to exercise its accountability via reports from the Executive Director of MI and from the President of IDRC. In practice, MI has reported through its Executive Director only twice since it was established in 1992: in February 1996 and in March 1998. These reports were in the nature of information updates and it is not clear how the Governors can exercise their accountability on behalf of IDRC on this basis.

The President of IDRC has an important place in the overall accountability structure. The President sits on the Steering Committee (she is the current Chair of the Committee). She represents one of MI's donors as well as the host institution. She must assure her Board that MI's programs are consistent with IDRC's mandate and that MI actions are in IDRC's best institutional interests, or at least not exposing IDRC to undue risk as an institution. There is thus an implicit framework within which MI must operate, for which the President of IDRC, together with the Executive Director, is responsible for MI's compliance. The information flow and working relationship between the Executive Director and the President (or her designate) is critical for making this accountability work.

8.1.3 Accountability of MI/IDRC to individual donors

MI/IDRC must report to individual donors on the use it has made of their funds. CIDA in particular provides several grants each year for specified purposes and parts of the Regular Program activities. CIDA has also taken the initiative to discuss in detail with MI how best to report on the impacts and results of the activities it is funding. It would be more efficient if MI could reach agreement with its donors to have a single reporting format to all funders that is related to the strategic objectives and Program of Work which they approve as members of the Steering Committee.

We also wonder if it would not be possible for the CIDA Special Projects grants to be converted into core grants for regular program activities, while retaining earmarked grants for only those specific projects falling outside the agreed regular Program of Work. This would shift the balance towards more coherence between MI's approved Regular Programs and the bulk of its funding. As we have noted, at present, the CIDA grants do allocate considerable parts of their funds to support the regular program activities, although the exact amount is difficult to calculate (and is not available to the Steering Committee under present reporting formats).

8.2 MI Steering Committee

The MI Steering Committee is the oversight body for MI's programs and as such its discussions focus on program matters.[38] The minutes record discussions that are admirably focused on substantive program issues. There does not appear to be much, if any, discussion of the financial reports. This may be a function of a lack of financial expertise on the Steering Committee and its mandate to be concerned with program matters. It may also reflect the problems we have identified in the information provided to the Steering Committee, which does not facilitate a linkage between budget spending and program objectives.

However, there is one area on which the Steering Committee did have clear information in the reporting to it: the accumulated *Fund Balance* rising from CAD $16.75 million in 1996-97 to CAD $41.41 million on April 1 2000 (table 8). Over the past years, the Financial Reports have presented a separate report on *Details of Fund Balance*. The minutes do not record any serious discussion of this unexpended budget, which we have flagged as a serious issue for MI. This information should have alerted the Steering Committee that some action was needed.

There are two questions that have been raised frequently in the evaluation interviews about the composition of the Steering Committee. One is the criterion that the initial Steering Committee set for membership in the group. The other is the impact of the restricted donor composition on the program of MI and the direction provided by the Steering Committee. One might even go so far as to pose the question: is the composition of the Steering Committee part of the problem in MI's lack of program focus?

At its initial meeting in April 1992 the Steering Committee decided that it should itself be made up of institutions that provide at least $100,000 to MI over its initial three years.

> In keeping with the need to exhibit commitment to the venture, Members agreed that a flat fee of $100,000 per agency should be established for MI Board membership. Members will be agencies not individuals, and representation may vary.
>
> SC voting would normally be consensus-generated. Nevertheless, members agreed that proportional "voting power" could be applied in cases where consensus is not feasible. It was stressed that no single agency should have the power to veto generally accepted plans and directions of the MI.

[38] This review of the role of the Steering Committee is based on (1) a review of the minutes of meetings 1992-2000; (2) interviews with all Steering Committee members including the Executive Director; and (3) discussions with MI staff on how the Steering Committee's decisions affect their work. We did not have an opportunity to directly observe any Steering Committee meetings.

> It was agreed that earmarking of funds by donors would be acceptable in principle but examined on a case-by-case basis. While all additional funding is to be welcomed, possible conflicts with the MI's broad philosophy and operational framework should be avoided.[39]

The "membership fee rule" limited the initial Steering Committee membership to CIDA, World Bank, IDRC and UNICEF[40] and made sense in terms of a three-year project, which MI was initially. In 1993, the $100,000 contribution was confirmed as one of the conditions of membership and used to deny membership to FAO, which had expressed interest in joining. By March 31 1995, the initial three-year project had come to an end, and MI had a deficit of over CAD $10 million.

In May 1995, the original donors identified their anticipated financial contributions for the next three years (on this basis the extension of the MI was later approved by the IDRC Board). The Steering Committee identified potential donors to be invited to join the second phase without articulating the $100,000 rule. USAID was invited to attend the SC meetings as an observer and appears to have joined the group as a member in its own right in September 1996.[41] They also agreed to a voting formula that would limit any one donor to having more than 49% of the vote even if its contribution to the budget was greater.[42]

These early decisions about the composition of the Steering Committee have created a governing body whose composition and style of operating we believe is different from what MI needs today. For example, the $100,000 "rule" was agreed in the context of a flat fee contribution to a three-year project. It has not been used consistently. It has resulted in excluding or deterring some key partners from joining MI, including FAO, WHO and some European bilateral donors. It has been flexibly interpreted to allow other members to be part of the group. It has raised questions even among members of the Steering Committee regarding its rationale and its impacts.

The decision in 1995 to base the "voting" power on the amount of funding contributed, while not used formally, has profoundly influenced the dynamics of the Steering Committee from being a group of equal voices around the table to one in which one donor's views are perceived as being dominant. This seems to produce an operating style in which different opinions are openly voiced at the meetings but the Steering Committee does not then act as a body or team to resolve the differences and arrive at a common view. Rather, differences remain unresolved and the guidance given to the

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[39] Minutes of the first meeting of the MI Steering Committee, 27 February 1992.

[40] Although technically UNICEF does provide regular contributions to MI (averaging just over $100,000 per year), it is a net recipient of MI funding.

[41] USAID provided US$ 50,000 through OMNI to activities earmarked for the Ottawa Forum on Food Fortification.

[42] Minutes of the MI Steering Committee, 1 May 1995

Executive Director and his staff tends to be more ambiguous or conflicting than is needed.

The recent strategic planning exercise is a case in point. In the end, the process produced a Strategic Plan that includes all the individual concerns of the Steering Committee members in its definition of program areas, but without clear prioritization and objectives – both of which should have come from the Steering Committee. The result, we were told, is something that everyone can live with, because it includes the activities they each feel are important, but no one feels is really what is needed. It is not a good recipe for a focused program or a Secretariat with a clear sense of direction. Without some change at the top, MI is likely to continue to chart a course that tries to meet the individual priorities of its donors and to keep everyone more or less happy.

What would we propose? An enlarged, more independent Steering Committee that is charged to make decisions with the interests of MI alone in mind. There are several reasons for this recommendation:

- MI's main modality is to work with and through partners. An expanded Steering Committee would increase the range of experience and perspective around the table, and enlarge the support group for MI;

- An enlarged Steering Committee would allow for some individuals nominated for their expertise in the field, including people from different regions, to contribute to MI's directions;

- A more independent body would improve the perception of MI as an international organization, and give more credibility to its actions. MI is presently seen by many as an instrument of a few donors;

- The Executive Director is in an impossible position with the present structure. He has to make judgments between the sometimes conflicting signals given to him by members of the Steering Committee, either inside or outside of the SC meetings. He is also without the advice of an independent Board which could more effectively adjudicate on the merits of a course of action being pressed by one or more of its donors.

- Members of the present SC, composed only of donors, are at risk of being in a conflict of interest position, because the interests of individual donors may not be the same as the interests of MI. While this is less of an issue for a time-limited collaborative project, it is of more concern eight years later when MI has acquired more of its own institutional identity. [43]

[43] It is for this reason that many donors have policies against sitting on the governing bodies of the organizations that they fund.

8.3 Technical Advisory Committee

The question of a scientific or technical advisory committee (TAC) for MI has come up throughout its history, as a means of strengthening the scientific and technical quality of MI's work. At its inaugural meeting in 1992 the Steering Committee was in agreement with the idea of an External Advisory Committee that would include eminent names in nutrition as well as providing broad managerial and operational advice. It proposed to drop the "Technical" designation. In the event, the Advisory Committee was never formally constituted. In May 1995 the Steering Committee again discussed the idea but rejected it in favour of calling on a group of people as individual technical advisors.

In our interviews, we raised the question again with the Steering Committee members and with a few of MI's senior advisors. The great majority felt that a TAC was not needed as a formal body for two main reasons:

- It would be difficult to find a small and workable group that can provide expert advice on all aspects of MI's programs; and therefore the idea of calling on individual experts as needed provided more flexibility;

- A TAC would add to the operational costs of MI and might build in rigidity as another body in the governance structure.

A few interviewees thought that a useful middle road might be to have small advisory groups called around major initiatives, such as the global iron strategy now planned for 2000-2005. These groups would not be "standing committees" but rather called on an *ad hoc* basis with membership and terms defined by program needs. We agree with this latter proposition, with the added proviso that the advice given to the Secretariat by any such advisory groups be also shared with the Steering Committee.

9 INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

From its inception, the relationship between MI and IDRC was not seen as necessarily a permanent one but rather one in which IDRC acted as host organization for an initial ten-year period.[44] During these first ten years, MI's goals were set to support the decadal goals of the World Summit for Children. It was anticipated that after ten years, MI's status would change. The MI Steering Committee discussed MI's status on several occasions, and looked at various institutional options. The conclusion was always that the *status quo* was the best option for MI. We have been asked to indicate what the evaluation findings might imply for the future of MI. This means looking again at MI's overall institutional relationship with IDRC.

9.1 Relationship with IDRC

As we have noted elsewhere, MI was IDRC's first experiment with the concept of an international secretariat. The relationship between the MI Secretariat "project" and IDRC was not thought out clearly at the outset, and was in fact the cause for several early misunderstandings between IDRC and the other donors. As IDRC's experience of MI and its 14 other International Secretariats grew between 1992-1999, IDRC policy and procedures in relation to its Secretariats became more codified.

At the same time, MI grew from a four-person secretariat with a budget of approximately CAD $6 million a year to its present 39 staff and budget of nearly CAD$38 million in 2000. It dwarfs the size and financial resources of any of IDRC's own Program Initiatives, or the other International Secretariats of IDRC.

MI is also different from IDRC in a number of important ways:

- The mix of modalities it uses for delivering its projects. IDRC is primarily a research funding and research capacity building organization, and most of its contracts are MGCs. In addition to funding research, MI is supporting operational research, development of technologies, technical assistance, pharmaceutical commodity procurement, and national nutrition development programs. Most of MI's contracts are not MGCs.

- Research with human subjects and intellectual property rights. While IDRC funds both kinds of research, the balance is very different from that of MI, many of whose research projects either deal with direct health interventions on human populations or are more likely to lead to patents and to raise issues of intellectual property rights. MI projects are

[44] Proposal to IDRC Board on Micronutrients Initiative, January 1992

therefore on average more time-consuming to process, as they require careful ethical, scientific and legal review on the part of IDRC to ensure "due diligence". They also have the potential to expose IDRC to greater risk than do the bulk of IDRC's research grants to developing country institutions.

- MI uses consultants as a key component of its human resources. IDRC uses its own staff and funds developing country institutions more often than consultants to carry out its work.

These differences and the overall scale of MI's operations have meant that IDRC's exposure to risk on the part of MI is quite different from that presented by the other Secretariats that IDRC hosts. As we have suggested at various parts of this report, the risks relate to the substantial funds involved and the delegation to an outside group (the Steering Committee) of some of IDRC's accountability to donors; the type of projects MI funds; and the financial risks to IDRC of hiring long term consultants under Canadian labour law for IDRC. Thus, from IDRC's perspective, it is assuming considerable risk and accountability on behalf of MI. In addition to which, the nature of MI's program and its operational style is particularly demanding on IDRC services from administrative, to legal and travel services.

From MI's and its donors' perspective, IDRC has required MI to use IDRC administrative policies, which in some cases do not meet the needs of MI; it has imposed IDRC pay scales for MI staff, which are believed to have made it more difficult for MI to recruit the senior people that is seen as needed; and it is overly cautious in reducing its exposure to risk which has slowed down the normal contracting process and made life difficult for MI, its consultants and its grantees.

The evaluation has shown that both perspectives have merit, and that the differences in view have been accentuated by two intervening factors: the operational and management style of MI and the lack of adequate information flow between MI and IDRC. Apart from the President of IDRC, who currently chairs the MI Steering Committee, there is no one within IDRC who is acting as a corporate focal point or "Task Manager" for MI to manage to overall relationship.[45] The Executive Director has not seized the initiative to deal with some of the problems in the relationship, such as travel policy for consultants, which, we are told, could have been dealt with by MI and IDRC agreeing to a special set of arrangements for MI, as long as whatever policy was agreed, was systematically followed by MI.

On the other hand, some positive changes have been made. We have noted that the appointment of the MI Grants Assistants has proven instrumental in dramatically improving MI working relations with IDRC Client Services Group. In 1998, IDRC agreed to make an exception in favour of MI of its policy on interest. According to this policy, funds generated by contributions to Secretariats are kept by IDRC. This is

[45] Occasionally a senior officer has attended an SC meeting or the discussion of a particular item (e.g. patents) but no one officer seems to have regularly attended SC meetings since the end of 1998.

reasonable if the funds concerned are limited and IDRC sometimes has to use its own funds to "backstop" donors' contributions to secretariats that arrive late. The retention of interest on the large donor funds provided to MI proved to be a major irritant in the relationship, and was solved by IDRC's action.

Although MI and IDRC clearly have other problems to resolve in their working relationship, they have both demonstrated a willingness to work together to find solutions to them. On the other hand, some of the issues raised with us about the scale, different styles and different degrees of risk between MI and IDRC, suggest that MI has evolved to a stage where IDRC and MI should consider whether the time has come to reconsider MI's future options. The beginning of a new strategic plan is also a good context in which to examine what those options might be. We would recommend that IDRC and the Steering Committee agree on a process for examining MI's future institutional development with the goal of arriving at a preliminary decision before the end of the fiscal year.

9.2 Institutional options

While it will be up to IDRC and the MI Steering Committee to agree on the best solution for MI, it would seem that there are five options that should be examined in the process that we are recommending. These are:

- The status quo revisited. MI remains as a Secretariat within IDRC but a new arrangement is concluded between IDRC and the Steering Committee covering all aspects of the relationship and thus serves as the basis for the interaction in the future.

- The new host option MI does not become a separate legal entity but moves to another host organization that is willing to receive it and makes an appropriate arrangement with MI and its donors. MI will therefore assume the legal identity of the new host organization.

- The merger option MI merges with an organization or an existing program and together they form a new legal entity.

- The co-location option MI becomes an independent legal entity and remains physically housed in IDRC from which it continues to purchase its administrative and other services as its Directors decide.

- The separate and distinct option MI becomes an independent legal entity and moves to new headquarters. IDRC is not its main service provider.

If it is agreed that MI will become a separate legal entity, the two main possibilities are either a non-profit NGO or to set up MI as an international organization with standing in international law. This is a far more ambitious and time-consuming approach that would require MI to be established by way of treaty to which several countries (or even international organizations) are party. It would be a difficult task to undertake without the leadership of Canada, since MI is already so identified with Canada.

9.3 Implications of a change in legal status

The ramifications of any change in legal status for MI are beyond the scope of this report, but there are three important ones that have been directly raised with us. These are:

- The current contracts of MI staff with IDRC will come to an end with MI's change of legal status and both parties will need to decide whether they will stay with IDRC or will be hired by the new MI.

- The new legal entity will have to renegotiate its presence in the South Asian countries where MI is currently represented under the IDRC Regional Office Agreement with the Government of India. One should not underestimate the work involved in formalizing the new MI's presence in India. There will also be the less complicated decision about where to locate the MI staff in India, who are presently housed in the IDRC Regional Office.

- Any major change in legal status, location or in service provider will inevitably bring major disruptions to program activities and to staff working relationships. MI and IDRC will need to consider carefully the costs and benefits of any change from a renegotiated "status quo" option to remain as part of IDRC.

10 MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 General conclusions of the evaluation

MI is fulfilling its mandate. It is playing an important and unique role in the global fight against micronutrient malnutrition. It has been accorded remarkable recognition among the major international agencies with which it collaborates; and MI has their goodwill and respect. MI has some real achievements that it can point to over its eight years of existence. It success stories include its role in the large scale distribution of vitamin A supplementation to seventy countries in the world where the problem is most severe; to support to the development of double fortified salt – which has the potential to be a major breakthrough with tremendous benefit for human health; to consensus building scientific meta-analyses on key debates within the nutrition community. MI is making a direct contribution to improving the health and well being of millions of vulnerable people around the world. It is not doing this alone. It is working with the support of its key donors and partners – CIDA, the World Bank, IDRC, UNICEF, USAID and others.

MI has achieved results despite some significant problems that it faces internally and some issues that need resolution in its program scope, its governance, funding base, and institutional status. The key problems to address are those of the management of the MI Secretariat. MI management does not yet have the systems in place to be able to manage MI programs and finances properly. The key systems it urgently needs are program and financial information systems, systems for organizing staff and secretariat functions, and procedures for efficiently and transparently providing services to its clients – its donors, its external partners and its recipients. All these systems can be put in place fairly quickly. Not much will change if they are not.

The more challenging task for management is to change the organizational culture to one that is more based on team work; on a better balance between responsiveness and efficiency; and more oriented to working with other international organizations to support the direction of their programs. In short, MI could better integrate "building alliances" into its everyday working life.

There are also challenges for MI's Steering Committee. One of the problems faced by MI management has been a lack of clear signals from the Steering Committee about its own vision for MI. Does the Steering Committee want MI to remain under the close control of its original sponsors and donors, or do they see MI as becoming more an institution in its own right – with its own priorities and guiding body to counterbalance the interests of its donors? MI needs the direction and support of its Steering Committee

as it embarks on a new strategy for the next five years and contemplates its institutional future.

One of the important issues ahead for the Steering Committee is to discuss with IDRC the various organizational options for MI, particularly whether MI should retain its present status as a Secretariat within IDRC and therefore legally a part of its host organization, or should establish itself as a separate legal entity – thus transforming the governance role of its present Steering Committee.

In the light of the evaluation study, we recommend that MI needs to take the remainder of this fiscal year as a transition year to put new systems in place, to reduce backlog and to deal with the accumulated budget reserve before beginning to implement its new strategic plan. MI management and staff need time-out to re-organize, re-focus and re-tool themselves for the major tasks and changes ahead.

10.2 Recommendations

The recommendations, together with the key conclusions from which they derive, are listed according to the structure of the report. The most significant ones, including some that are likely to be controversial are underlined.

MI's current program

MI currently has a project portfolio of some 76 projects in 50 countries in all developing regions of the world. Some of these are multi-million dollar commodity procurement projects; others are for an individual workshop. In term of numbers, the present projects are primarily focused on vitamin A and multi-micronutrients, and on research and technology development in food fortification. Advocacy and working with partners are two of the main ways in which MI implements its program. Almost all of the current projects are undertaken with partners. MI's main partners in its current projects are UNICEF, WHO, PAHO, and the World Bank. Although MI does not pay explicit attention to gender analysis, its programs primarily benefit women and children in improving their health status.

Advocacy

- Advocacy is both a focus area in MI's programs and a key modality through which MI implements the rest of its programs. In its new Program structure MI could consider recasting advocacy as the primary modality and not have a separate focus area devoted to it. This would not necessarily change the amount

of resources devoted to advocacy but would make the setting of objectives clearer.

- MI should undertake more critical advocacy which is scientifically sound and does not "start with solutions instead of questions"; and where dissenting views are given a hearing. The meta-analysis of iron is a good example and has enhanced MI's reputation.

- MI should build its advocacy strategy on developing alliances with strong partners because it is one of the most effective ways to influence people. It should not try to "go it alone" or be overly concerned with getting credit. Effecting change in governments, the private sector and in international organizations is more important (and more recognized) in the long term than seeking "Made in MI initiatives".

- In developing a new advocacy initiative for iron, MI should ensure that it has access to the best expertise on iron to ensure the credibility of its actions and because iron anemia deficiency is a more complex problem to solve than deficiencies in iodine or vitamin A.

- MI could consider more consensus building multi-stakeholder processes as part of its advocacy strategy.

- MI could consider developing an advocacy strategy specifically to promote wider involvement of the private sector in fighting micronutrient deficiencies. This could build on the plan of action outlined at the Ottawa Forum 1995 which proposed involving the Codex Alimentarius Commission in developing guidelines for food fortification to encourage more private sector action.

Research and technology

- MI should continue its support to research and technology development across the spectrum of technology development that it currently undertakes. This part of MI's programs targets key obstacles and uncertainties, mainly in food fortification and builds on MI's strengths.

- More networking of research and technology development projects is recommended to encourage technology transfer between regions. One example is to adapt the experience of fortification at the household milling level from Africa to Asia.

- MI could do more policy research on legislation, regulation and economic incentives to encourage the private sector to fortify foods, particularly to share national experiences across regions, including from the industrialized countries.

- MI could invest in more development of fortification technologies that can be used by small enterprises, households and primary food producers like farmers, as well as the formal food processing sector.

- It is recommended that MI commission an independent scientific assessment of the progress made in double or multiple fortified salt with recommendations for future strategy for MI in this area.

National and regional programs

- MI should consider reducing the amount of work it is supporting in national and state micronutrient programs because it is not one of MI's comparative advantages, and MI does not have the human resources to provide the technical support needed.

- Any future work in national programs should be in collaboration with international partners that have a strong presence in the country and access to government and financial resources. MI should not seek to independently develop program initiatives with government.

- National programming should include a large capacity building component, for both local institutions and governments. MI should be prepared to have the program work take longer if it also builds local ownership and capacity. Wherever possible, local consultants from the region should be involved.

- Regional networks with strong partners around specific themes such as flour fortification build more on MI's program strengths than do national nutrition programs. The flour fortification network in the Middle East and North Africa with WHO is a good example.

Publications and web site

- MI should put in place an integrated strategy for information dissemination which includes both its publications and its website. It should focus on what it does best - which are technical publications and technical briefings and make as many publications as possible available on its website for free download.

- MI has undertaken more publications than it can handle in-house. This has led to problems of delays, misunderstandings with co-sponsors of meetings and reports, and criticisms that undermine the advocacy value of the publications.

  To deal with these problems, it is recommended that MI do fewer publications and out-source more of the work, including technical editorial work much of which is presently done by MI professional staff. MI should also ensure that the

arrangements to publish reports are clearly understood by its partners and that MI abides by the agreements.

- MI publishes many proceedings of meetings, some of which are overly delayed and therefore do not capitalize on the momentum generated by the meeting itself. As far as possible, meeting reports should be primarily distributed free on the MI website.

- As a priority, MI's website should be rebuilt and re-launched to become a premier website for micronutrient information, especially food fortification. It should be interactive and a key mechanism for MI to facilitate on-line discussions on key issues and distribute materials to participants in its meetings and workshops.

Key program issues

The key program issues raised in the evaluation concern MI's organizational niche with respect to its partners; the decision criteria used by MI to define its priorities and individual project support; the management of its partnerships, which are critical to the implementation of its program and to its success; the link between sustainability and capacity building in MI's projects; and the feedback between monitoring and evaluation and program planning.

What is MI's niche?

- MI's niche is seen both within MI and its partners as advocacy and building alliances through the provision of funds and technical expertise. However, some of MI's program activities seem to fall outside of its niche and raise questions for its partners. These include commodity procurement and national programs.

  It is recommended that MI explain more clearly to its key partners the rationale for its work in national programs and commodity procurement in the context of its comparative advantage as an organization and its working partnerships with them.

Program focus

- Building on MI's strengths and on the major gaps and needs as assessed by the international community, MI should give high priority to iron and food fortification.

Decision criteria for program management

- MI needs a clear set of decision criteria to be able to say no and to arrive at more equitable and efficient decisions on project funding. This must go hand in hand with the development of better information systems for managing projects.

- It is recommended that MI put in place as a priority a Performance Based Management System(PBMS) that will allow it to link planning, progress and results. The decision criteria to be built into this PBMS should include results based management and analysis of needs and opportunities (gaps analysis).

- As a start, it is recommended that MI consider a core set of some 10-20 indicators which could include the measures developed by CIDA for progress in food fortification and additional persons covered by supplementation programs.

- The MI-PBMS should be designed with input from its key partners to explore the potential for using some common indicators to measure results, and to encourage the international community to develop some common criteria and measures in micronutrient programs and evaluations. This approach could bring benefits in terms of MI's increased transparency and leadership and could lead to more agreement on measuring and reporting on collaborative projects.

Management of MI's partnerships

- MI implements its program through and with its partners. The key ones are seven international agencies with which it implements half of its current activities, especially UNICEF and WHO.

- MI should consider more carefully its corporate relationships with its partners and develop a code of conduct that is supportive of more effective working relationships with them. The elements for such a code of conduct policy might include:

    - Increasing the transparency of MI's operations by providing more information about the decision criteria used in MI and who on staff are the focal points for each major initiative;

    - Ensuring that collaborative arrangements are clear to all parties and are followed, including agreed timeframes for tasks undertaken by MI;

- Being more open to input from partners when MI has the lead and to sharing credit in agreed ways;

- Helping partners to strengthen their own programs and organizations, through arrangements such as MI secondments and internships, and identifying opportunities for collaboration and follow-up action by partners.

Partnerships with the private sector

- Working with the private sector is seen as one of MI's big comparative advantages, together with its good track-record in building dialogue between the public and private sectors. MI should continue to focus on this important advocacy work with the private sector and involve it in more of its projects.

- MI's private sector partners are less well informed about the overall context and scope of MI's work and are therefore less likely to see opportunities for enlarging the partnership and/or proposing creative solutions to problems. MI should ensure that its private sector partners are not compartmentalized into specific commercial relations but are engaged in a broader sense in fighting micronutrient deficiencies;

- For those companies which derive commercial benefit from working with MI (including commercially useful information), it is recommended that MI have a policy that seeks to have the companies contribute to the public good – and specifically to further the goals of food fortification for poor and vulnerable populations. These contributions could include in-kind training opportunities for developing country personnel.

- MI could seek corporate funds for some of its work in food fortification, especially from the charitable arms of major companies in food production. Before doing so, it should have in place a *Policy for Accepting Private Sector Donations* that sets out the conditions under which MI would be able to accept donations; would prescribe the ways in which corporations can use the donation in their communications and would proscribe any imputed endorsement of the company by MI.

Sustainability and capacity building

- While sustainability in micronutrient programs is a long way off, there are ways that MI can work to achieve sustainability in its projects. These include:

    - Working through existing structures and avoiding creating new or duplicative ones;

- Working closely with partner organizations, including within their procedures and promoting mutual goals;

- Finding good partners and good projects and working only on those;

- Using alliances and good partnership skills to convince those with the resources (especially the major donors) and those with the responsibilities (governments) to take over projects and programs;

- Transferring projects as soon as possible to the private sector;

- Building the capacities of governments and institutions before they are expected to take over responsibility for programs.

- Supplementation projects are seen as more dependent in the long run on international donors. Fortification projects are more promising prospects for sustainability because the private sector usually builds the costs into its prices over the long term. Both supplementation programs and "incubator" support to fortification programs are seen as needed for the next two decades.

- Capacity building is a key mechanism for building long term sustainability. MI has not done as much work in building the capacity of local institutions and individuals in the past as it might have. It is recommended that MI give more priority to capacity building, especially activities that are integrated into its other programs. It should also think through its goals and strategy for capacity building.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

- MI has not given as much attention to monitoring and evaluation in the past as it should do in the future. In this, it is not unlike most organizations that were interviewed. The effects of advocacy actions are particularly difficult to measure separately from the impact they have on MI achieving other program goals.

- MI should establish an evaluation framework as part of its proposed Performance Based Management System (PBMS) to integrate monitoring and evaluation into future program decisions.

- In addition to its current evaluations of projects, MI's corporate learning would be strengthened if it systematically put in place:

    - Meeting evaluations by participants as inputs to staff reviews of what lessons are to be learned after each meeting MI organizes or sponsors;

- Readerships surveys of key publications and the MI website;

- Selected "in-depth" reviews or scientific audits of important or highly visible projects within an established cycle of review for different program areas;

- Written assessment of consultants' performance and providing feedback to them;

- A field in its proposed project database for "lessons learned" when projects and files are closed, which is systematically reviewed internally for patterns and "higher order lessons learned";

- More project monitoring and evaluations which should be outsourced not only to consultants, but also to developing country institutions (which will also help to build their capacity);

- Establish a timetable and framework for regular external evaluations of MI as part of the Strategic Plan 2000-2005, including a review process for follow-up actions resulting from this evaluation.

Strategic Plan 2000-2005

The evaluation findings have some implications for the new strategic plan which relate both to the process and to its outcome.

Strategic planning process

- The strategic planning process took more than a year and considerable time commitment from MI staff and the Steering Committee. It did not involve MI's partners except in asking a few individuals for comments on a penultimate draft. Most people agree that the outcome is less than satisfactory but is sufficient to move ahead.

- An alternative recommended approach to strategic planning in MI would be:

  - A "strategic objectives" paper is prepared by the Executive Director through internal and external consultations;

  - The Steering Committee reviews the paper and after discussion, decides on MI's strategic objectives and main priorities for the next five years;

- Using the Steering Committee decisions as a framework, MI prepares a Strategic Plan and an Implementation Plan for the five years;

- The Steering Committee approves the documents and MI staff prepare the annual program of work and budget (PWB) for later approval by the Steering Committee.

Strategic Plan 2000-2005

- In its present form, the Strategic Plan does not include the objectives that are needed to provide a basis for evaluating MI's performance although it does foresee a Performance Based Management System and objectives. In this regard, it is recommended that:

  - A set of 3-4 clear, measurable objectives are set for each focus area;

  - MI should consider recasting "advocacy" as a major modality rather than as a separate program area in the Plan;

  - The objectives are linked to specified targets, indicators, outcomes and expected results in an *Implementation Plan* for the strategic planning period of five years;

  - The PWB for 2000-2001 could be adjusted later in the year to reflect any changes indicated by the *Implementation Plan* and the objectives for approval by the Steering Committee.

Key Operational Issues

There are several aspects of MI's work that could be improved in order to make MI more efficient. Key among them is the urgent need to put in place an information system tailored to MI needs, to iron out bottlenecks in staff management and contracting processes. Better integrating MI SARO and the NPOs into the mainstream of MI is also a factor in improving program delivery in South Asia.

Information management

- MI should as a matter of priority identify its needs for a program management information system. These needs should be defined by a Task Force comprising both program and administrative sectors of MI as well as external expertise in program management and relational database development.

- The proposed program management information system should be able to generate various kinds of reports (to donors, for planning purposes, for measuring progress and impact); it should provide for inputting data on indicators and project activity should refer back to strategic objectives.

- The proposed system should be so structured that all kinds of financial reports can be generated and show expenditures incurred in a given country or for example, for a certain type of fortification intervention.

- The database should be a core resource used for corporate learning with evaluations and monitoring information regularly entered – eventually, it should be linked to MI's website and be accessible to interested external parties.

Secretariat Functions

Project Review and Administration

- MI should reduce administrative tasks by funding larger projects with longer timeframes and making more frequent use of competent executing agencies for technical backup and monitoring of projects.

Processing of contracts

- MI program staff should be expected to comply with performance standards, especially as regards turnaround time, relating to the components of contract processing requiring their input.

- MI and IDRC should continue in their efforts to find ways to remove duplication in the contract review process and to have in place some acceptable form of long-term contract that could be used for consultants.

Organization of meetings

- MI should plan its meeting strategically and not get involved in meetings that do not contribute significantly to its objectives.

- MI should designate for each meeting a task manager who would coordinate all activities and inputs relating to the meeting and avoid last minute changes.

Staff Management

Organization of work

- MI needs to better plan and manage travel and staff on travel should be available to the office electronically.

- Three-month travel plans should be submitted by all staff and managers for regular review by MI management at their Executive Committee meetings.

- MI should have in place a common information system so that any staff member can access updated information on the status of a file, proposal, action or decision, and can enter into the file any action they have taken or request received.

- Staff members should be organized as 'Task Managers' so that one person, plus a second person as a back-up, is designated as a focal point for each major or special activity or file.

Differentiation of roles

- Directors should focus more on managing; they should have little or no project portfolio and should reduce travel associated with project development and monitoring.

- The Executive Director should focus more on the bigger picture and the making of strategic alliances to move MI's agenda forward. He should delegate more tasks to his Directors and should refer incoming questions to the appropriate Unit or Officer. He should not normally be directly involved in the proposal review process or in dealing with the administrative or process problems of consultants and recipients. The Executive Director remains responsible for the overall administration of MI.

- All Program officers that were new to MI and IDRC when they joined MI should receive more training in IDRC procedures.

- MI management should attend to the distribution of work between Grants Assistants and Program Assistants and rewrite the job descriptions of the latter.

MI's Management Team

- Under the leadership of the Executive Director, the Executive Committee consisting of the Deputy Executive Director and Unit Directors constitutes MI's management team; its terms of reference should be formalized and highlight the committee's role in respect of program, financial and administrative management.

- Agenda of Executive Committee meetings should be posted beforehand so that all staff can forward their suggestions and minutes should be made available to all staff on MI's Intranet or through some other appropriate mechanism.

Regional Staff

Role of regional staff

- NPO's should avoid getting too 'hands on' when advising national governments.

- NPOs should be granted clearly defined authority to expend funds for program-related purposes.

Role of MI SARO

- There should be a clearer understanding of the roles of MI-SARO and MI-Ottawa *vis a vis* one another and in relation to the work of the NPOs. In particular, MI SARO management should be involved in any major decision being considered by MI-Ottawa in respect of the region.

- MI SARO should be informed of proposed staff and consultants visits well ahead of time.

- MI SARO and NPO's should pay special attention to working with agencies in the region/country with active programs relevant to micronutrient malnutrition.

Regional Advisory Committee

- MI SARO should be encouraged to pursue its plans to establish national advisory committees and to resurrect under an appropriate format the regional advisory committee.

- The Steering Committee should be regularly informed of the advice and recommendations emanating from these committees.

Consultants

- MI needs to think more strategically about how to use consultants – seen as extensions of its own human resources. Those working closest with MI should be dealt with more as staff: they should be invited to participate in staff meetings, their work should be better integrated into that of the Secretariat as a whole and they should contribute to its vision.

- MI's long-term consultants should be managed by results (that is, have specific goals, given regular written feedback and have their performance evaluated at least annually by the appropriate Director, in consultation with the Management Team).

- Administrative difficulties in the handling of MI consultants should be discussed between MI and IDRC managers; MI should actively seek departures from standard IDRC administrative policies, where this is warranted.

- MI should consider the opportunities that may be generated by widening its roster of consultants, in particular, it should make greater use of expertise in developing countries and elsewhere outside North America.

Financial Issues

Financial status and donor support

- Over the next 2-3 years, MI, in cooperation with its donors and through a more efficient mode of operations, should aim at eliminating its Reserve Fund.

Fee for services activities

- Given its current reserve and workload, MI should not be acting as a consulting firm and engaging in fee for services activities; once these problems are resolved, it should do so only exceptionally and for very strategic reasons.

Future diversification of funding

- Before engaging in a donor diversification strategy, MI should first significantly reduce or indeed eliminate its accumulated Reserve Fund.

Governance

MI's governing body – composed mainly of donor agencies – affects very much by its decisions the way the whole Secretariat operates. Also the web of accountability relationships for international Secretariats at IDRC is overly complex - involving as it does the Steering Committee, IDRC (the President and the IDRC Board) and individual donors - and is probably not the most suitable for a Secretariat with MI's scale of operations. With the information currently made available to it, the Steering Committee is unable to exercise proper oversight over MI's program delivery.

Steering Committee

- The Steering Committee should be enlarged by the addition of other reputable experts, including one with a financial and management background, representing different MI constituencies (partners, recipients, NGOs etc);

- The composition and role, powers and functions of the Steering Committee need to be formalized, consolidated and accessible to members, staff and other interested parties.

- In consultation with the Executive Director, the Steering Committee should agree on the Secretariat's strategic objectives for MI's program cycle.

- Information provided to the Steering Committee should be improved. Program information should be presented by reference to the Strategic Plan, the proposed implementation plan, the Program of Work and Budget, or the Performance Based Management. Specifically, the current practice of submitting a narrative activity update should be

abandoned in favour of a more systematic and more rigorous reporting by strategic objective or focus area.

- Financial information should parallel the program information so that the Steering Committee may be in a position to better judge on the advisability of investments. In particular, the current practice of reporting on expenditures mainly by reference to overlapping broad Special Projects and Regular Programs should be done away with.

- The Executive Director should report *in camera* to the Steering Committee on his stewardship of the Secretariat and in particular on the challenges he is faced with. The Steering Committee should use this opportunity for providing feedback to the Executive Director. It should also *in camera* and in the absence of the Executive Director provide its input to his Performance Appraisal Report prepared annually by the President of IDRC.

- The Steering Committee should put in place a cycle of evaluations for different aspects of MI's work.

Technical Advisory Committee

- The Steering Committee need not have a formal technical advisory committee attached to it. Instead, the MI management, in consultation with the Steering Committee, should consider the setting up of *ad hoc* advisory bodies around major initiatives that are being planned – such as the proposed global iron strategy; the advice provided by such groups should be shared with the Steering Committee.

IDRC

- IDRC should consider appointing a senior officer with responsibility for managing all aspects of the IDRC-MI relationship for the Centre. That officer – in addition to the President - should regularly attend meetings of the Steering Committee.

- The Executive Directive should be particularly sensitive to his responsibility for making the Secretariat's accountability to IDRC work.

- The Executive Director and the President (or her designate) must maintain a good working relationship and ensure a good information flow between them.

Institutional Issues

The relationship with IDRC

MI is currently set up as a separate unit within IDRC. When it was originally established, this arrangement was viewed as being operative for a ten-year period at the end of which an assessment would be made of its continued relevancy. Since its inception, MI has grown to point where in terms of staff and resource it is now far larger than any other program unit within IDRC save for the whole of the Program Branch itself. In addition, MI's *modus operandi* has also developed as something very unique within IDRC. All this sets the stage for undertaking now a review of what should happen next to MI as an institution.

- IDRC and the Steering Committee should agree on a process for examining MI's future institutional development with the goal of arriving at a preliminary decision before the end of the fiscal year.

10.3 Next steps

If the findings and recommendations of the evaluation study are accepted in their broad outline, they imply that some immediate next steps should be taken. In our view, these tasks will require much of the Secretariat's time and energy in the next six months and it cannot therefore be "business as usual" for MI. We would propose that the remainder of 2000-2001 be seen as a transition year in which the first order of the day is to put the new systems in place and to allow staff to reduce the backlog and refocus on the new strategy.

One key task is to design a program strategy based on results for dramatically reducing the accumulated budget reserve. There is considerable opportunity for doing this. Last fiscal year, MI's 23 grants averaged less than CAD $48,000 each (excluding large two grants for $6 million). MI should develop larger projects with more out-sourcing of tasks like technical support and monitoring.

The key tasks in **program management** are to:

- Put in place the several elements of a Performance Based Management System;
- Specifying the strategic objectives for the Strategic Plan (and having them approved by the Steering Committee within the next two months);
- Preparing an Implementation Plan (including results, indicators etc);

- Elaborating a rolling Program of Work and Budget.

The key tasks in **governance** are to:

- To recruit new members, who could initially be invited to serve in an advisory capacity on a "Transition Board" (if the Steering Committee agrees to expand its membership);

- To undertake a study of the different institutional futures for MI.

The key tasks in **Secretariat operations** are to:

- Put in place an integrated program information system that is designed to meet needs defined by both the programs and administration parts of MI ;

- Develop an integrated financial management component of the information system;

- Deal with the back-log of proposals and other outstanding work of the Secretariat;

- Prepare new *Calls for Proposals* based on the strategic objectives and the implementation plan and rebuild the website;

- Develop a work-plan with the Steering Committee to reduce the accumulated reserve over the next two or so years.

In our view these tasks will – and should - occupy the time of most of the Secretariat management and staff until the end of this fiscal year in March 2001. The tasks need to be underpinned by a period of consolidation, re-orientation and team building (including between MI-Ottawa and MI-SARO) before embarking on a new program cycle.

ANNEX 1. LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR THE EVALUATION

Sector	*Organisation*	*Name*	*Position*	*Location*
Partner Organisations				
	ACC/SCN	Sonya Rabeneck	Tech. Secretary	Geneva
	CIDA	Ernest Loevinsohn*	D G, Food Aid Centre	Hull
		Barbara MacDonald*	Senior Nutritionist	Hull
		Joanne Moores	Senior Analyst	Hull
		Luc Laviolette	Project Mgr	Hull
		Carla Hogan Rufelds	CIDA Representative	Kathmandu
			First Secret. & Consul	
	HKI	Ian Darnton-Hill	VP Programs	New York
		Shawn Baker	West Africa Rep	Niamey
		Indra Raj Pandey	Project Director	Kathmandu
		Judy Hollander	Consultant	Kathmandu
		Nalina Shakya	Nutrition Education Advisor	Kathmandu
	ICCIDD	Francois Delange	Executive Director	Brussels
		C.S. Pandav	Regional Coordinator S. Asia and Pacific	New Delhi
	IDRC	Maureen O'Neil*	President	Ottawa
		Roger Finan	Regional Director	New Delhi
		Rob Robertson	Corporate Counsel	Ottawa
		Lise Chasse	Ass. Counsel	Ottawa
		Treena Braggar	Acting Coord. CSG	Ottawa
		Nancy Smyth	Senior Off. PBDO	Ottawa
		Angie Anton	Coord. Travel and Conf.	Ottawa
		Louise Champagne	Admiral Travel	Ottawa
	INF/UNU	Nevin Scrimshaw	Sen. Advisor	
	INVACG IVACG	Suzanne Harris	Executive Secretary	
	Netherlands Min. Foreign Affairs	Elly Leemhuis-de-Regt	Dir. Nutrition	The Hague
	PAHO	Wilma Freire	Food & Nutrition Coord.	Washington DC
	UNICEF	Roger Shrimpton*	Chief of Nutrition	New York
		Werner Schultink*	Senior Advisor, MN	New York
		Joyce Greene	Comm. Coord., MN	New York
		Per-Olof Blomquist	Chief Nutrition, Nepal	Kathmandu

		Richard Bridle	Sen. Program Officer	Kathmandu
		Amy Gilman	Nutrition, Nepal	Kathmandu
		Alan Court	Representative	New Delhi
		Patrice Engle	Chief Child Dev. & Nutrition	New Delhi
		Yuki Shiroishi	Project Officer, Health and Nutrition	Dhaka
		Sayeed Begum	Health and Nutrition	Dhaka
	USAID	Frances Davidson*	Senior Nutritionist	Washington DC
	WHO	Tracey Goodman	Tech Officer, EPI	Geneva
		Anna Verster	Dir. Health Protection	Cairo
		Sultana Khanum	Regional Advisor - Nutrition	New Delhi
	World Bank	Judith McGuire*	Human Dev. Dpt	Washington DC
		Milla McLachan	Nutrition Advisor	Washington DC
		Rae Galloway	Nutrition Adv.	Washington DC
		Peter Heywood	Principal Health Specialist	New Delhi
CONSULTS And GRANTEES				
		Jack Bagriansky		
	Univ. Toronto	George Beaton	Professor Emeritus	Toronto
		Alan Berg	Former World Bank	Washington DC
	Univ. Toronto	Levente Diosady		Toronto
	PATH Canada	Sian Fitzgerald		Ottawa
		Jonathan Gorstein		
		Jim Greene		
	Manoff Group	Marcia Griffiths		
		David Haxton		
	U.of Guelph	Abdullah Hussein		
	U. of Guelph	Quentin Johnson		
	Tufts U.	Jim Levinson		
	PAMM	Glen Maberly		
	ProMarket	Ravi Philar		Ottawa

GOVERNMENT				
India	Dept. Food Processing Ind.	K.K. Gupta	Jt Secretary	New Delhi
	Dept. Women & Child Develop.	V.S. Rao	Jt Secretary	New Delhi
	Dept. Social Welfare, West Bengal	Manjula Gupta	Principal Secretary	Calcutta
	Nat. Nutrition Programme	Indira Chakravarty	Dean, All India Institute Hygiene and Pub Health	Calcutta
Bangladesh	Integrated Nutrition Project	Mohammad Ayub Yeakub Patawary	Joint Secretary Consultant	Dhaka Dhaka
	Nat. Nutrition Council	Mohammed Mannan A.Z. Amanatullah	Secretary Deputy Secretary	Dhaka Dhaka
	Nat. Nutrition Project	Razoul Karim M. Huq	Director	Dhaka Dhaka
	Instit. Public Health Nutrition	Mamunar Rashid	Director	Dhaka
Nepal	Nat. Planning Commission	Padma Mathema	Development Economist	Kathmandu
PRIVATE SECTOR				
	Accucaps	Sean Ashley	Chief Financial Officer	Acton, Ontario
	Hoffman-La Roche	Karoly Nagy	Tech. Marketing, Vitamin Div.	Greazach-Wyhlen, Germany
	ILSI	Alex Malaspina	President	Atlanta
	Internat. Sugar Organisation	Lindsay Jolly	Economist	London
	Kapoor Bros. Roller Flour Mills	Vinod Kapoor	President	Chandigarh, India
	Nat. Fed. Coop. Sugar Factories	S.S. Sirohi	Chief, Sugar Technologist	New Delhi
	Oil Technologist Assoc. India	K.P. Sharma	President, Northern Zone	New Delhi

	Proctor and Gamble	Haile Mehansho	Research Scientist	Cincinnati
NGOs	BRAC	Mushtaque Chowdhury	Dep. Exec. Director	Dhaka
		Ziauddin Hyder	Senior Research Nutritionist	
		Rita Das Roy	Researcher	Dhaka
	Child in Need Institute	M. Barati	Dir Nutrition	New Delhi
	Instit. For Community Health	C.R. Pant	Director	Kathmandu
	Local Initiatives Program (LIP)	Ayub Sayeed	Program Director	Dhaka
		Sylvester Costa	Project Manager	Dhaka
	NTAG	Ram Kumar Shrestha	Director	Kathmandu
	Nutrition Syndicate	Kalyan Bagchi	Director	New Delhi
	West Bengal MI Project	S. Som	Director	Calcutta
		K. Ganguly		Calcutta

Micronutrient Initiative Secretariat	Management	Venkatesh Mannar	Executive Director	Ottawa
		Frank Eady	Deputy Exec. Dir.	Ottawa
		Jenny Cervinskas	Dir. Programs (acting)	Ottawa
		Faris Ahmed	Dir. Info. & Comm.	Ottawa
		Raymond Robinson	Dir. Finance &Admin	Ottawa
		Louis Laleye	Dir. Tech. & Research	Ottawa
		Teresa Beemans	Regional Dir. S Asia	New Delhi
	Program staff	France Bégin	Sen. Program Spec.	Ottawa
		Erik Boy	Sen. Program Spec.	Ottawa
		Alison Greig	Prog. Support Officer	Ottawa
		Ibrahim Daibes	Manager Info & Com	Ottawa
		Ross Miller+	Manag.Finan/Admin	Ottawa
		Mahshid Lotfi	Sen Program Spec.	Ottawa
		Annie Wesley	Sen. Program Officer	New Delhi
		Nada Elhusseiny	Prog. Support Officer	Dhaka
		Thomas Schaetzel	Sen. Prog. Specialist	New Delhi
		Mohammad Shahjahan	National Prog. Officer	Kathmandu
		Sarawasti Bulusu	National Prog. Officer	New Delhi
		Macha Raja Maharjan	National Prog. Officer	Dhaka
	Support staff	Danielle Elise Gagnon	Executive Assistant	Ottawa
		Vepe Percival	Program Assistant	Ottawa
		Carrie Smith	Program Assistant	Ottawa
		Betty Alce	Program Assistant	Ottawa
		Debbie Montgomery	Program Assistant	Ottawa
		Dorice Paquette	Admin Ser. Clerk	Ottawa
		Loretta Rocca	Grants Assistant	Ottawa
		Chantal Hunter	Grants Assistant	Ottawa

* Member of MI International Steering Committee
\+ Left MI April 2000

ANNEX 2. ACRONYMS

ACC/SCN	UN Administrative Coordinating Committee/Sub-Committee on Nutrition
APC	Additional Person-Year Coverage
BNIP	Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition Project
CAD	Canadian Dollar
CAPC	Cost per Additional Person-Year of Coverage
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSG	Client Services Group, IDRC
DFS	Double Fortified Salt
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization, WHO
EPIK	Information system, IDRC
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FRAT	Fortification Rapid Assessment Tool
FY	Financial Year
GPM	Grants and Project Management System, IDRC
GVAI	Global Vitamin A Initiative
HKI	Helen Keller Worldwide
ICCIDD	International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders
ICU	Information and Communication Unit, MI
IDD	Iodine deficiency disorders
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILSI	International Life Sciences Institute

INCAP	Instituto de Nutricion de Centro America y Panama
MGC	Memorandum of Grant Conditions
MI	Micronutrient Initiative
MOST	USAID Micronutrient Program
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIDs	National Immunization Days
NPO	National Program Officer, MI
OMNI	Opportunities for Micronutrient Interventions, USAID project
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
PAMM	Program Against Micronutrient Malnutrition
PATH	Program for Appropriate Technology in Health
PBDO	Partnership and Business Development Office, IDRC
PBMS	Program Based Management System
PI	Programme Initiative, IDRC
RADIUS	Information system, IDRC
SARO	South Asia Regional Office, IDRC
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization